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ILLUSTRATED EXPLANATION OF THE  
PRAYERS AND CEREMONIES OF THE MASS.







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THE PRIEST GOES TO THE ALTAR.

ILLUSTRATED EXPLANATION  
OF THE  
PRAYERS AND CEREMONIES  
OF THE MASS.

✓ BY  
REV. D. I. LANSLOTS, O.S.B.

WITH A PREFACE BY  
MOST REV. F. JANSSENS, D.D.,  
*Archbishop of New Orleans.*

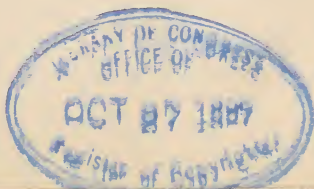


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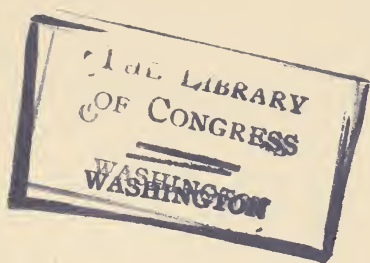
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✠ MICHAEL AUGUSTINE,  
*Archbishop of New York.*

NEW YORK, *August 28, 1897.*

## PREFACE

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As the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist is the centre of our holy religion, so the altar is its principal visible emblem, which forms the centre of attraction and of importance in a Catholic church. All the parts of the building should be directed to give the sanctuary and altar prominence and beauty; and the eyes of all the faithful should be concentrated on the altar of God, for it is on the altar that the highest and holiest mysteries and ceremonies of God's Church are enacted. The altar implies a sacrifice; a sacrifice demands a priest; what then of more interest to the faithful than to understand fully the meaning of the altar and of the sacrifice offered by the priest thereon? This book, "Explanation of the Prayers and Ceremonies of the Holy Mass," deals with these important topics, and clearly explains the meaning of the altar, of its ornaments, of the vestments, and of the ceremonies performed by the celebrant and his ministers.

If the faithful understood better the full meaning of the holy sacrifice of the Mass, understood the ornamentation of the altar, the vestments of the priest, the different parts of the Mass, their faith in the holy mysteries would be strengthened, and an intelligent and strong faith would develop into an active faith. If all Catholics possessed this intelligent and active faith, surely it would not be necessary for the Church to command the assistance at Mass, but Catholics would consider it a great privilege to be allowed to assist at holy Mass, not merely on Sundays and holy-days, but even on ordinary week-days. This treatise will do an immense amount of good. There is no charity so effective in our days for the good of faith and virtue as to scatter this and other books of the kind among the people, so as to enlighten them in their faith, to make them practise their religion, to be a consolation to them in the miseries of life, and thus to add peace and contentment to their lot here below, and smooth the way that leads to the eternal joys of heaven.

† F. JANSSENS,

*Archbishop of New Orleans.*



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## INTRODUCTION.

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THE Church is a moral body, its Head is Christ, its members are the faithful. The Head and the members co-operate in the actions of the Church, and principally in the holiest and sublimest act of religion—the holy sacrifice of the Mass. Through the sacred liturgy, and chiefly from the holy Mass, the spirit and the life of Christ flow into His mystic body and all the members who take part in it with attention and devotion. It is possible for one to be present at the mysteries of our holy religion and yet not partake of the fruits thereof. Although one may be present bodily at the holy sacrifice of the Mass, yet if he take no part in it, and is in no-wise a co-offerer with the High-Priest of the New Law, he will not experience the salutary influence which Christ exerts in His mystic body. We see this clearly exemplified by the many spectators at the bloody sacrifice on Golgotha.

What did it benefit the impenitent thief? What profit did the obdurate Jews derive from it? In order to benefit by the holy sacrifice, the members must be united to the Head, and be co-offerers with Him. Such were the Blessed Virgin and a few other pious persons who were present at the sacrifice of the cross. The same may be said of the apostles in the Cenacle. They prayed with Jesus and Jesus with them. They heard His words and followed His actions, they thought or spoke only of what was being done before them; in a word, they were co-offerers in the holy sacrifice. The Christians of the primitive Church acted in the same manner at their meetings. Bishops, priests, and laity were so closely united that they formed but one heart and one soul. The Prince of the apostles, in his first epistle (ii. 9), calls the first Christians "a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood," surely not in the sense which the Reformers of the sixteenth century attached to these words, as if each of the faithful were exalted to the priesthood of the New Law, but because they were chosen to take part in the holy mysteries of the Christian altar. Would to God that the unity of the first Christians might ever have permeated the mem-

bers of Jesus' mystic body. Would to God that Christians would now assist at the awful sacrifice of our altars animated with the feelings and the dispositions of the apostles and the first Christians. But, alas! how degenerate have we become in the religious sentiments of our ancestors in the faith. And why? Because our faith languishes, and because we do not strengthen our weakness by the means which made heroes of them. Why do Christians show so little respect and devotion for the sacrifice which is daily offered on the altar for their salvation? Why do they so readily dispense themselves from assisting at holy Mass, often for imaginary reasons only? Because they do not sufficiently reflect over the sublime work at which they assist as sleeping members, or because they do not know how to unite themselves with their Head in the combined offering of the sacrifice to God. We are certain, therefore, that our respect and devotion for the august sacrifice of our altars would increase in proportion to our knowledge of the ceremonies and prayers of holy Mass. We could then make the words of the Psalmist our own: "How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts: my soul longeth and fainteth for the

courts of the Lord. . . . For the sparrow hath found herself a house: and the turtle a nest for herself, where she may lay her young ones. [I find] Thy altars, O Lord of hosts; my King and my God " (Ps. lxxxiii. 2-4).

# Explanation of the Prayers and Ceremonies of the Mass.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE ALTAR.

THE idea of an altar is as old as that of sacrifice itself. We find traces of it among the first descendants of Adam. Abel, Noe, Abraham, and all the patriarchs erected altars under the blue canopy of heaven to offer thereon their sacrifices to the Lord. When the people of Israel, after a long and dreary journey in the desert, had reached the Land of Promise, after they had ended their wanderings, and had now permanently set up their tents, they erected a magnificent altar in the Temple of Jerusalem. This wonder of art, on which neither gold nor silver was spared, was a figure of our altars, on which, from the rising of the sun even to the going down, a clean oblation is offered (Mal. i. 11).

The first and most venerable altar, on which Christ Himself offered the unbloody sacrifice, was a wooden table, which even at this day may be seen among the precious relics in the Church of St. John Lateran in Rome. In the beginning of Christendom, when the blood of martyrs flowed in streams, every place became a temple; anything that could be used as such, an altar. In the prisons, in the catacombs, wherever the Christians thought themselves safe against the mad ferocity of their persecutors, the holy sacrifice was offered. An ordinary table, a common board, served then as an altar. Sometimes the first Christians would go aboard ships in order to be protected by the sea and be able to celebrate the holy mysteries. At last, when the field of the Lord had been sufficiently irrigated by the blood of martyrs, and the dawn of peace had risen with the conversion of Constantine and his elevation to the imperial throne, the Christians began to erect altars of stone, endeavoring thereby to make them worthier of the sacrifice offered on them. The Church, inspired by the Holy Ghost, ever intent to preserve unity, which is one of her divine attributes, judged that the one real offering of the New Law required uniformity in the



construction of altars which would subsequently be erected in the Christian world. It is therefore ordered:

1. That the altar-table (*mensa*) must be a single stone. This stone is the figure of Christ, who has said of Himself: "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner" (Matt. xxi. 42). On this corner-stone is built the spiritual edifice of the Church. To this corner-stone the Church owes her strength. It makes her imperishable.

2. That the altar be consecrated. The altar-stone represents not only the rock of Calvary, but Christ Himself, "who is the spiritual and mystic Rock" (1 Cor. x. 4), and is also emblematic of the virtue and holiness required of those who offer the holy sacrifice, assist at it, or receive the sacrificed God in holy communion. The consecration of an altar-stone is one of the most solemn ceremonies of our holy religion. After many prayers and ceremonies, the bishop blesses salt, ashes, and wine, and mixes them in holy water. These elements are figures both of the human and the divine nature of Christ, as well as of the mortal body and the immortal soul of man and of the union of both in the blood of Christ. It is not

our object to explain the whole ceremony of the consecration. We must add, however, that the bishop makes with the above mixture five crosses on the altar-stone, one in the middle, the others on the four corners. This reminds us of that stream of grace which flows from the five wounds of Jesus, and which diffuses itself from the altar upon the Church and the faithful.

3. That in the altar-stone be inclosed relics of saints. This prescription is grounded on the general practice of the first Christians, who erected altars on the tombs of the martyrs. Those who shed their blood for Christ rest at the feet of Christ, who is the real Altar, and who gave them strength to conquer their enemies—on the altar the Lamb; under the altar those who sacrificed their life for the Lamb, in order that love and its grateful return may be united even in death. This is corroborated by a vision of St. John, as related in the book of Apocalypse (vi. 9). “When He [the Lamb] had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held.”

4. That the altar be on an elevated place, and as far as possible be turned towards the east.



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THE PRIEST PRAYS AT THE FOOT OF THE ALTAR.



The altar must be turned towards the east because, as we said before, it represents Christ, the Sun of justice. The altar must be on an elevated place, to put us in mind of Calvary's mount and to remind us that we ought to elevate our hearts heavenwards. The altar, on which our eucharistic God and King has His throne, is the noblest sanctuary on earth; it is the chosen paradise of devout souls. There Our Lord calls us far away from the noise of the tumultuous world; there the thirsty soul finds a foretaste of heavenly happiness.

## CHAPTER II.

### ALTAR DECORATIONS.

THE altar is the holiest place that can be found on earth. The majesty of God descends upon it; and the body and blood of the Lord rest upon it for the salvation of the world. Love and gratitude towards the God-Man make it a duty for Christians to see that the altar be not without ornaments. Could man, after having received so many blessings from the Lord, content himself with offering Him in return a bare stone for a resting-place? No! A heart in which every sentiment of love towards God is not extinguished cannot but desire that the best, the most beautiful, and the most precious be devoted to His service; it wishes to be able to exclaim with David: "I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of Thy house" (Ps. xxv. 8). We should not content ourselves with what is strictly necessary. When Magdalen anointed the feet of Jesus with precious ointment, one of the disciples remarked

that this was not necessary, that the money could have been put to better use. But who was it that said so? Judas, the traitor. The New Testament seems to vie with the Old in embellishing the altar with costly and magnificent decorations. The chief things which the liturgy prescribes or recommends for the ornamentation of the altar are as follows:

1. The altar must be covered with three white linen cloths, blessed by the bishop, or by a priest empowered to bless them. These cloths remind us of the linen towels in which the dead body of the Saviour was shrouded and in which it was buried. They at the same time represent the faithful, who are as a precious garment of Christ. The altar must be so covered throughout the year, except on Holy Thursday, when after Mass the altar is laid bare, to put us in mind of the shameful stripping of Christ's most chaste body and of his abandonment during His passion.

2. On each altar there must be two, four, or six candlesticks with wax candles; two for a Low Mass, four for a High Mass, and six for a Solemn High Mass. The sacrifice can never be offered except there be at least two lighted candles. History proves abundantly that in the first ages



of Christianity costly candlesticks adorned the altar. The first Christians followed the example of the faithful of the Old Law, on whose altars shone several candlesticks of pure gold and the finest workmanship. The Church prescribes that the candles used during Mass be of wax, for the lighted wax candle is one of the most impressive figures of Christ. As the virgin bee gathers pure wax from the flowers, so did Jesus assume His pure body in the womb of the Flower of Nazareth, the most holy Virgin Mary. Even as a bright flame glitters from the pure wax candle, so did the divinity of Jesus shine forth in His doctrine, His life, and His miracles. The burning wax candle signifies, moreover, the participation of the faithful in the holy sacrifice and their union with Christ; numerous texts of Holy Scripture testify to this. The burning wax candle is also a figure of our hope. "Light is risen to the just and joy to the right of heart" (Ps. xcvi. 11). The hope in a future Redeemer on the part of the faithful in the Old Law finds its fulfilment on the Christian altar: "To them that sat in the region of the shadow of death, light is sprung up" (Matt. iv. 16). In the midst of the cares and anxieties of this life the Christian



must, like the burning candle, whose flame ever rises on high, even when inclined or upset, raise his eyes and heart to the Origin of all hope and of all consolation: *Sursum corda*. Lastly, light is a figure of our love. The candle consumes itself, while it burns and gives light. So did Christ during the whole term of His mortal life, and especially during His passion, consume Himself out of love for us. On the altar, during Mass, and in the tabernacle, Jesus continues that life of love till the end of ages. There glitter as in their centre the rays of His divine love and enkindle in our hearts the fire of the sincerest return of love. On the altar Jesus, the Light of the world, sacrifices Himself for us,—He who is the hope of our life, the fire of divine love, and in the light of glory will be our happiness without end. To remind us of these great truths, could there be a more beautiful, a more appropriate figure than the burning wax candle?

3. The chief requisite on each altar is the crucifix, which serves to remind priest and faithful, during the holy sacrifice, of the life and death of Christ. The cross is the glorious standard of the Redeemer, who, during Mass, offers in an un-

bloody manner the same sacrifice which He once offered in a bloody manner on Calvary.

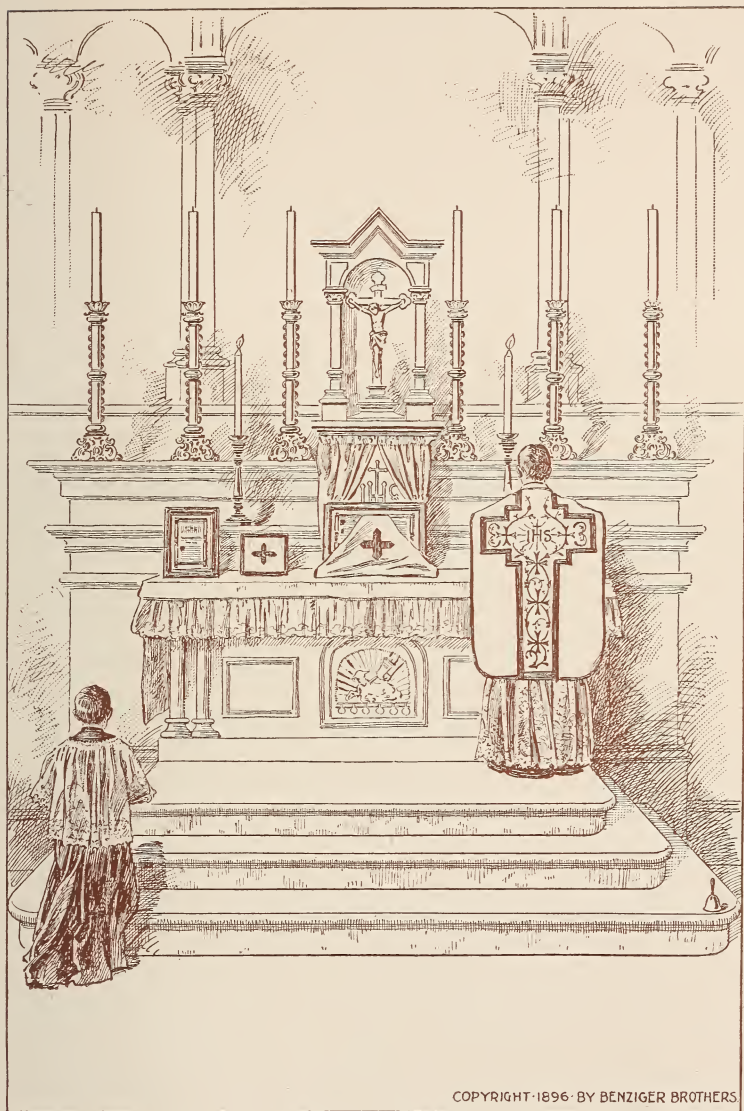
4. Next come the sacred relics and the images. Costly reliquaries are placed between the candlesticks, and not without reason; for whatever is said of the grave of the Saviour applies to a certain extent to the resting-places of His saints. "His sepulchre shall be glorious" (Is. xi. 10). They surround the cross, and silently tell us that the sacrifice at which we assist procured for the saints the grace to obtain the crown of life. They speak to us of the love which Christ bears to all the members of His mystic body. Round the altar kneel rich and poor, young and old, and all are received by Jesus with the same affectionate love, when, animated with the same feelings, they offer themselves to Him in offering the holy sacrifice.

5. It is a praiseworthy custom, which has its origin in the subterraneous oratories of the first Christians, to decorate the altar, especially on festive occasions, with natural or artificial flowers. Flowers are the charming remnants of a formerly blessed world, and seem not to have been comprehended in the general doom; they are striking revelations of God's beauty. A

pious follower of the gentle saint of Assisi used to say: "Three things has God left us from the earthly paradise, viz.: the stars, the flowers, and the eye of a child." The flowers are one of the most beautiful of liturgical images. Not only is Jesus Christ Himself called a flower out of the root of Jesse, but flowers also are emblems of His saints, as recorded in many passages of Holy Scripture. "The just shall flourish like the palm-tree" (Ps. xci. 13). "I was exalted as a rose-plant in Jericho" (Ecclus. xxiv. 18). "As the lily among thorns, so is My love among the daughters" (Cant. ii. 2). The flowers admonish us in their language to adorn our souls with the various virtues by which we may glorify God. Adorned with innocence and purity of heart, we will be found worthy to take part in the offering of Him who grazes among the lilies.

6. From time immemorial costly carpets and artistic laces have formed part of the altar decorations. St. Gregory of Tours testifies that, in his day, not only the altars, but even the walls of churches were decorated with precious curtains and draperies. Noble and pious women vied with each other, and spared neither time, money, nor pains to work with their own hands

pieces of art wherewith to enhance the glory of the Christian altar. The Old Testament speaks of costly curtains for the decoration of the Tabernacle and the Temple, and these but prefigure the Christian altar and church. Thus spoke the Lord to Moses: "Thou shalt make ten curtains of fine twisted linen, and violet and purple, and scarlet twice dyed, diversified with embroidery" (Ex. xxvi.). In this and following chapters is clearly laid down all that is required for the decoration of the Temple and the altar with all their appurtenances; nothing is omitted. Hence we may draw this conclusion: if at the express command of God so much was required for the decoration of the Temple, which comprised but a little manna, the tables of the Law, and a few other figures, in themselves all needy elements, what should not a Christian do towards decorating the altar of which the King of heaven and earth deigns to make His throne? The most beautiful products of our love ought to be devoted to the glory of God's house. It is only then that we can in truth say with David: "I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of Thy house; and the place where Thy glory dwelleth" (Ps. xxv. 8).



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AT THE INTROIT.



## CHAPTER III.

### THE CHALICE AND ITS APPURTENANCES.

THE *chalice* and the *paten* take the first place among the requisites for the holy sacrifice: the paten, on which the body of the Lord rests, and the chalice, in which His adorable blood flows. Before being used, both must be consecrated by a bishop; after that laymen are not allowed to touch them. The chalice out of which the Saviour gave His blood to His disciples to drink was not of gold, and yet it was precious and venerable. It is not known with certainty of what composition the chalice was which Jesus used at the Last Supper; some maintain that it was of silver, while others assert that it was an earthen cup. In the beginning of Christianity, when the oratories reflected more the poverty of the stable of Bethlehem, wooden, glass, or copper chalices were used. In the first half of the third century the wooden chalices were abolished by Pope Urban I. (222-230); afterwards those of



glass, horn, stone, etc., were equally forbidden. If the means of churches permitted, chalices of costly metal and fine workmanship were used. According to the present rulings of the Church, the chalice must be either of gold or silver; only in cases of extreme poverty are base-metal chalices permitted. But if the cup be of silver or base metal it must be gilt, at least inside. This also applies to the paten. It is, however, clear that the validity of the sacrifice does not depend upon the value of the chalice. But it is desirable that the most costly metal be used for the holiest and sublimest work that can be accomplished on earth. The chalice is a striking figure of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The divine Heart is the blessed fountain from which the blood of the Saviour flows into thousands upon thousands of chalices on the Golgotha of the Christian altar. In His sacrament of love Jesus makes His blood flow by means of the chalice of salvation into the hearts of the faithful, to enliven them and to enable them to bring forth fruits unto salvation.

Chalice and paten remind us, moreover, of the wood of the cross on which the body of Christ hung, and of the holy sepulchre in which the



Saviour's body rested after He had offered the bloody sacrifice.

The chalice represents also in a striking manner the passion of Jesus. The Saviour Himself often attached that meaning to it. In the Garden of Olives, sorrowful even unto death, and clearly seeing all the tortures which ungrateful humanity had reserved for Him, He prayed His heavenly Father to remove that chalice from Him (Matt. xxvi. 39); at the same time offering Himself to drink it to the last drop if it were His Father's will. Jesus alluded to this meaning when He asked His apostles: "Can you drink the chalice which I shall drink?" (Matt. xx. 22). The apostles and the martyrs have answered gloriously by shedding their blood for the Crucified. The confessors and virgins who were not privileged to give to Jesus that shining testimony of their love, at the remembrance of what their Lord and Master had done for them, asked themselves with the Royal Prophet: "What shall I render to the Lord, for all the things that He hath rendered to me?" And they have answered: "I will take the chalice of salvation: and I will call upon the name of the Lord" (Ps. cxv. 12, 13). They have endeavored to fol-

low their God by voluntary penance and patient forbearance.

Lastly, the chalice is a figure of love coupled with purity. The Latin word *calix*, or the Greek *χάλυξ*, seems to indicate that meaning. These words mean cup; also a flower. Pure souls drink out of it the wine which bringeth forth virgins; they draw from it, as pure bees, the honey of divine love.

Among the appurtenances of the chalice are the *corporal*, on which the body and blood of Christ are consecrated, and the *pall*, used to cover the chalice. Originally the pall was part of the corporal; even now the same formula is used for the blessing of both. The corporal must be of pure white linen. This was ordered by Pope Eusebius, who governed the Church in the beginning of the fourth century. Great respect is due to the corporal and the pall, as well as to the purificator. The Church, therefore, orders that after having been used at the altar they first be washed by a cleric who has received one of the higher orders, and that the water be poured into the *sacrarium*. The corporal reminds us of the white linen cloth wherein the body of Jesus was wrapped; the pall the

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winding-sheet wherein His sacred head was enveloped; while the chalice signifies the grave, the pall, the tombstone. The purificator is used for wiping the chalice and the fingers and mouth of the priest after communion. The corporal must be handled with great respect, and ought not to be carried back and forth with bare hands, nor be left on the altar. The Church uses the *burse* to enclose it. The burse should be open only on one side and large enough to receive the folded corporal; it must besides be of the same material and color as the vestment. The *veil*, wherewith the chalice is covered before the Offertory and after the Communion, must be of silk and of the same color as the vestment. It is called veil because it covers the chalice, and also because it alludes to the deep mysteries accomplished in the chalice, which are hidden from us.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE PRIESTLY VESTMENTS.

WHEN in the Old Law God notified His people by what offerings He willed that they should acknowledge His supremacy, He appointed Aaron and his descendants as mediators between Himself and man. In the exercise of their duty they had to wear a singular yet appropriate apparel. God ordered Moses (Ex. xxviii. 2) to make a holy vesture for his brother Aaron, for glory and for beauty. "Thou shalt speak to all the wise of heart, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom," thus spoke the Lord, "that they may make Aaron's vestments, in which he being consecrated may minister to Me. And these shall be the vestments that they shall make: A rational and an ephod, a tunic and a strait linen garment, a mitre and a girdle. And they shall take gold, and violet, and purple, and scarlet twice dyed, and fine linen." The obvious question now arises: If the Lord in the Old Law re-

quired such superb and precious vestments for the priests in offering sacrifices, which were mere figures, shadows of the sacrifice of the New Law, how ardently must He not desire that the priests appear in beautiful and rich vestments when they proceed to offer the unbloody sacrifice with the High-Priest of the New Law? In the very first ages of Christianity the Church prescribed for her priests a separate apparel, which was quite different from the common fashion, and ran no risk of being adopted by the laity. She had a very good reason for doing so; these visible signs were to inspire the faithful with greater respect for the invisible sacrifice. When the Reformers of the sixteenth century, as precursors of Antichrist, to whom power shall be given against the continual sacrifice, succeeded in replacing in some places holy Mass by soulless services of prayers and lectures, they began also to mock at the priestly vestments, in order to screen their apostasy. Many of our separated brethren have acknowledged the mistake of their ancestors, and resumed by degrees the very vestments which they once rejected. Unfortunately they have no real priests and consequently no offering, for their religion is a body

without soul. The priestly vestments for the holy sacrifice are the following: the amice, alb, girdle, maniple, stole, and chasuble. Pope Innocent III., speaking on this subject, says that the different vestments which the priest wears at the altar signify one thing in regard to the Head, namely, Our Saviour, and another thing in regard to the members. Because the priest at the altar takes the place of Head and members, these vestments signify now the one, then the other.

The *amice*, or shoulder-dress, is so called because it must cover the head and the shoulders of the priest. The priest first holds the amice before his face; to signify Jesus Christ, the hidden God, who concealed His divinity under cover of His humanity, especially during His passion. It reminds us besides of the mockeries which Jesus bore when the bloodthirsty Jews blindfolded Him and buffeted Him in the face, saying: "Prophecy unto us, O Christ, who is he that struck Thee" (Matt. xxvi. 68). In a moral sense the amice admonishes the priest and the faithful to be vigilant during holy Mass, that neither their eyes nor their understanding may be carried away nor they busy themselves with vain





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AT THE KYRIE ELEISON.





thoughts. That is why the priest prays while he puts on the amice that he may overcome all diabolical incursions. And not without reason, for, if the devils as roaring lions ever run round seeking whom they may devour, they must redouble their efforts during Mass to besiege the faithful with dangerous representations in order to take away their attention from the altar and deprive them of the merits thereof.

The *alb* is a long, white, linen garment which covers the priest from the shoulders to the feet. The alb is, in the first place, a figure of the snow-white garment of sanctifying grace which we received in Baptism, and which is increased by the sacraments of the New Law. The alb is also a figure of the glory wherewith the elect will be crowned in heaven. The great multitude which St. John saw before the throne of the Almighty were clothed with white robes. It was revealed to St. John that "these were they who were come out of great tribulation and had washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Ap. vii. 14). The alb, moreover, puts us in mind of Jesus Christ, the High-Priest of the New Law, of His joys and of His sufferings. In snow-white robes Christ appeared

to His apostles at His glorious transfiguration on Thabor. Herod put on Him a white garment to deride Him. After He had expired on the cross His lifeless body was enveloped in white linen sheets. Finally, the alb is a figure of the spotless innocence and purity of body and soul which ought to adorn the priest at all times, but especially when He offers the adorable sacrifice. The prayer of the priest when putting on the alb expresses this: "Make me white, O Lord, and cleanse my heart, that I, being whitened in the blood of the Lamb, may enjoy eternal gladness."

The *girdle* represents the ropes wherewith our Saviour was bound and the rods wherewith His sacred body was scourged. While putting on the girdle the priest says the following prayer: "Gird me, O Lord, with the girdle of purity, and quench in my loins the humor of lust, that there may remain in me the virtue of continency and chastity." The girdle is therefore a figure of continency and virginal chastity, and also of the subduing of concupiscence, the seat of which is the loins. Hugh of St. Victor remarks that the priest binds with the girdle the stole, the emblem of priestly power, crossways over his breast, to show that the virtue of chastity above all other

virtues will make him a worthy minister of the altar. Virginal chastity is the most precious and most glittering gem in the crown of priestly virtues. It gives him that independence and that manly courage which are so necessary to him in the exercise of his priestly duties.

The *maniple* seems not to have been numbered among the priestly garments in the beginning of the Church. It had more the shape of a handkerchief, which the subdeacon, deacon, and priest wore on the left arm. It is evident that in those days of fervent faith, when the faithful passed hours and hours in churches or catacombs, considering the intense heat in countries where the Gospel was first preached, many a drop of perspiration had to be wiped away during divine service. For many centuries, however, the maniple has been a priestly garment, as we have it now. In a moral sense the maniple is an emblem of the tears of penance; of the fatigues attached to the priestly office; of the toil and work of the priest, and also of his joyful reward in eternity. This is expressed in the prayer said by the priest when putting the maniple on his left arm: "Let me merit, O Lord, to bear the maniple of weeping and sorrow, that I may receive the recom-

pense of my labor with exultation." The maniple further typifies the ropes and the chains wherewith the Saviour was bound during His passion, particularly the chains wherewith He was tied to the pillar to be scourged.

The *stole*, like the maniple, reminds us of the ropes wherewith Jesus was bound during His passion. It is the proper emblem of priestly power and is, therefore, used at every exercise of that power, in churches and in private dwellings, in public and in private. Only those who belong to the three highest orders of the ecclesiastical hierarchy are allowed to wear the stole. The way in which it is worn indicates the order to which they belong. The deacon, who has not yet received the power to consecrate, to retain or to remit sins, puts the stole on his left shoulder and crosses the two extremities under his right arm. The priest, whose power is limited and dependent, crosses the stole on his breast. The bishop, who has received the fulness of the priesthood, *lets the two sides hang down*. The Pope alone has the right to wear the stole always and everywhere, because he alone is the vicegerent of Jesus Christ, our High-Priest, who has said of Him-

self: "All power is given to Me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. xxviii. 18), and from whom every power and every mission proceeds: "As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you" (John xx. 21). At the ordination of a priest the bishop says, while investing him with the stole: "Receive the yoke of the Lord, for His yoke is sweet and His burden is light." These words indicate that the stole is a figure of the fatigues and consolations attached to the priestly office. His calling very often requires of him great self-sacrifices. To preach the word of God, to administer the sacraments, especially the Sacrament of Penance, to visit the sick, no matter with what sickness they may be stricken, to direct souls intrusted to their care, and other similar duties, show clearly that the priestly office is really a yoke. That is why the stole is worn on the shoulders. When the priest puts on the stole he says the following prayer: "Render unto me, O Lord, the stole of immortality, which I lost through the prevarication of our first parents, and, although I approach unworthily to Thy holy mystery, may I nevertheless deserve to attain everlasting joy and felicity." The stole admonishes the priest to apply himself with all his soul and

heart to his own sanctification, that he may receive the garment of immortality.

The vestment proper, or the *chasuble*, may be used only for the holy sacrifice of the Mass, and on no other occasion. In regard to Christ, the chasuble represents the garment without seam, made by the hands of His blessed Mother, which during His passion was torn from His sacred person. It also represents the purple mantle wherewith the incestuous Herod clothed Him in scorn. The words uttered by the bishop while presenting the chasuble to the newly ordained priest explain its mystical signification: "Receive the sacerdotal garment, for the Lord is powerful to increase in you love and perfection." The chasuble is therefore an emblem of love. Even as the chasuble covers the other vestments and perfects the priestly apparel, so does love throw light and perfection on all other virtues; love is the goal, the band of perfection. The chasuble is worn only at Mass, for on the altar is the Furnace of divine love; there *burns* the heavenly fire that must enkindle our cold hearts. When Jesus, the Good Shepherd, left the world to return to His Father, He charged the priests with the care of His flock. Love of God and of



the neighbor must be the soul of the priest's zeal. We may well apply to the priest, attired in his sacerdotal garments, the words which Holy Scripture applies to a high-priest of the Old Testament: "He [Simon, the high-priest] shone in his days as the morning star in the midst of a cloud, and as the moon at the full. And as the sun when it shineth, so did he shine in the temple of God. . . . As a bright fire, and frankincense burning in the fire. As a massy vessel of gold, adorned with every precious stone. As an olive-tree budding forth, and a cypress-tree rearing itself on high, when he put on the robe of glory, and was clothed with the perfection of power" (Ecclus. 1. 6-11).

## CHAPTER V.

### THE LITURGICAL COLORS.

EVEN as the Lord prescribed a distinctive garment for Aaron and his descendants in the exercise of their priestly duties, so He willed that certain colors should speak in their language to the senses and contribute towards exciting men to greater respect. "I entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God: and thou becamest Mine. . . . And I clothed thee with embroidery, and shod thee with violet-colored shoes. . . . And thou wast adorned with gold and silver, and wast clothed with fine linen, and embroidered work, and many colors" (Ezech. xvi. 8-13). The Lord wishes to see His bride, the holy Church, adorned with rich apparel and many colors when she proceeds to renew with Him the offering of the cross on the altar. The colors are as figures of the treasures of grace wherewith the Lord enriches His Church, and of the mysteries which He celebrates with her in the



course of the liturgical year. As the bright light of the sun shows itself to us in striking variations of colors, shooting forth its crimson rays by the rising aurora, making the broad firmament glitter in azure blue, or covering the earth as with a carpet of colors, which culminate in a superb rainbow, and thereby gives light and life, and makes everything grow and flourish; so also does the Sun of justice shoot forth from the altar His rays into the spiritual world, gives life and light to His members, and adorns them with varied flowers of virtues. “Every year the Church sees her youth renewed, because in the course of the liturgical year she is assisted by her heavenly Bridegroom. Every year she sees Him anew as a child in the cradle, later fasting on the mountain, again sacrificing Himself on the cross, rising from the dead, and finally ascending into heaven, whence He sends the Holy Ghost upon His disciples. Every year the Spirit of God takes possession anew of His well-beloved, and assures unto her light and love. Every year the Church draws an increase of life from the maternal influence which the Blessed Virgin exercises over her on the days of her joys, her sorrows, and her glorification. Every

year do the heavenly spirits and the saints, the apostles, the martyrs, the confessors, and the virgins obtain for her powerful assistance and unspeakable consolation" (Guéranger). What is true of the Church in general applies also to each of the faithful, solicitous to receive the gifts of God. The liturgical colors adopted by the Church for her priests and altars are so many figures of the mysteries celebrated during the ecclesiastical year; they serve to explain them and add splendor to them; also to place their results in a clearer light before the eyes of the faithful. The colors which the Church has selected and prescribed in her liturgy are white, red, green, purple, and black.

*White* is the emblem of innocence, joy, and glorification. White is the garment of the newly baptized infant after it has been purified in the Sacrament of Regeneration from all stain of sin. Shining was the face of the Lord at His transfiguration on Thabor, and His garments were white as snow (Matt. xvii. 2). The heavenly multitude of saints, which no man can number and which St. John saw before the throne, in sight of the Lamb, are clothed with white robes (Apoc. vii. 9). Since during holy Mass the King

of glory comes down to enrich His Church and the faithful with treasures of graces, white, the emblem of joy and glorification, is the appropriate color. The alb and the amice are always white. All the vestments are white on those feasts which remind us more than others of celestial joy, purity, and glory. These are, in the first place, the joyful and glorious mysteries of Our Saviour, such as Christmas, the day on which the Sun of justice, clothed with our humanity, as a child in the cradle, smiles at us; Easter, the day on which Christ, triumphant over death, rises from the grave, and on which the Church every year sings exultantly: "This is the day which the Lord hath made: let us be glad and rejoice therein" (Ps. cxvii. 24); Ascension Day, on which the Lord ascended gloriously into heaven; Corpus Christi, when the God of love, concealed under the sacramental appearances, pours streams of grace and joy on humanity; all other joyful feasts of the Saviour require the typical white vestment. Next come the feasts of the Blessed Virgin Mary, that lily of enchanting beauty, in whose rays the saints of the Old as well as those of the New Law disappear. The white vestment is also used on the feasts of

the holy angels, of confessors, and of virgins. The angels are by their nature pure spirits, eternally happy in the beatific vision of the Divine Majesty. The confessors are those faithful servants to whom the Lord addresses, at their death, these sweet words: "Well done, good and faithful servant: . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt. xxv. 21). The virgins are those pure lilies which will flourish forever in the sight of the Lord. The white vestment further puts us in mind of the white baptismal garment, and admonishes us to do our utmost to keep it clean and undefiled, if we wish afterwards to be crowned with glory.

*Red* is the richest of all liturgical colors. White is the color of light; red is the color of the most intense light, viz., fire. Red is therefore chiefly the emblem of love, of which the heart is the seat. Like the setting sun on a clear summer day, love glows most intensely in the bloody offering of life through martyrdom, as Our Saviour Himself testifies: "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John xv. 13). "In this we have known the charity of God, because He hath laid down His life for us" (1 John iii. 16). The

Holy Church uses red on all feasts that have reference to the passion of our divine Saviour. It would have been, on the part of God, an exceedingly great mark of love towards us, had He given us His only-begotten Son in order that, clothed with humanity, He should reign on earth to receive the homage of His creatures; but it is far beyond the human intellect to comprehend that God's love towards ungrateful mankind should go so far as to deliver up His own consubstantial Son to suffer and to die on a cross. The cross was the altar on which He completed the work of reconciliation; the blood He shed was the price He paid for our redemption. By the red vestment the Church places before our eyes the love of Jesus, as shown especially during his passion and also her love towards her divine Bridegroom. To that love she has testified by the bloody martyrdom of her children. The Church, therefore, uses red on the feast-days of the holy martyrs, who, fearing neither torture nor death, sacrificed their lives for Him. Finally, red is used on Pentecost. On that day the priest wears the red vestment to represent the tongues of fire, under which form the Holy Ghost then visibly appeared, and descends even now in an

invisible manner into the hearts of millions of faithful. Pentecost is as the birthday of the Church, which is vivified by the blood of Jesus and watered by the blood of martyrs. Nothing could be more appropriate to represent that love than the color of love. In the Canticle of Canticles we read of the heavenly Bridegroom: "My beloved is white and ruddy" (v. 10); and so white and red are the principal colors of the liturgy.

*Green* is the favorite color of the human eye, on which it produces a soothing and salutary influence. Green is the primitive color of nature, the color of all growing plants. It is in every country the color of hope and peace. The dove which Noe sent forth from the ark brought back in its beak a green olive-branch to show that the waters of the deluge had subsided. Green is the chief color of the rainbow which God placed in the heavens as a sign of peace. In more than one respect is green a very appropriate color, symbolizing the different attributes and the very essence of the Church. For in the Church we have a band of unity and peace among nations; she inspires us with the sweet hope of a happier life; she is that flourishing tree, watered and vivified by the precious blood of Jesus Christ,



whose crown extends to heaven, and whose branches spread over the whole earth. Green is used on the Sundays between Epiphany and Septuagesima, and between Pentecost and Advent. These Sundays have no particular festive character, and remind us of the quiet and peaceful working of the Church in the well-founded hope of the future. Hope is our strength and guide during our pilgrimage to the heavenly fatherland. St. Gregory admonishes us when we see the green vestment to remember eternal spring in the other life, where the blessed flourish forever.

*Purple* is one of the weak colors. It reflects the rays of light as veiled, and for this reason is not suitable to represent a joyful event, but rather to excite in us serious considerations. Purple is principally the color of penance and mortification, coupled with a humble and earnest desire after the eternal goods. Purple is, then, the appropriate color on those days which are, more than others, days of penance, and on which the Church exhorts the faithful to penance, as for instance Advent and Lent. Although Advent is not the time of strict penances, like Lent, as the Church expresses in her liturgy

the assurance that the Saviour of the world will soon be born, yet she prepares herself by penance to give Him a worthy reception. She will therefore not lay aside her purple vestments till the Word is made flesh and the joyful canticle of the angels (the *Gloria in excelsis*) echoes in the air. During Lent the whole liturgy of the Church bespeaks penance; beginning on Ash Wednesday, when she puts ashes on our heads, to make us think of our nothingness and at the same time to remind us of the curse whereby God subjected our first parents to death on account of sin, until Holy Saturday, when the joyful Alleluia will resound through the Church, she uses purple vestments except at the Mass on Maundy Thursday. The purple vestments are used besides on the ember days, on which the faithful by prayer and penance besiege Heaven to obtain zealous laborers for the vineyard of the Lord. Purple is also used on the vigils of great feasts, to induce the faithful to prepare themselves by works of mortification and penance in order to obtain a greater share of the graces which Our Lord is wont to bestow on such occasions. Finally, for the same reasons purple is used on all public manifestations of penance and





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AT THE DOMINUS VOBISCUM AFTER THE GLORIA.



mortifications, such as the processions on St. Mark's day and on Rogation days. Whenever we see the purple vestment used in church, we are reminded of the words of Our Saviour: "Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

*Black* is the color of death and of the grave, and the sign of deepest sorrow. Holy Church uses black on Good Friday, the day on which the Saviour of the world in the excess of His love died nailed to a cross. The whole creation put on mourning on that day: the sun was obscured, the earth shook to its very foundation, everything was plunged in grief to express its inmost sadness for the frightful murder of a God. Everything weeps and moans; the liturgical color on that day expresses the sincere sympathy of the Church in the passion and tortures of her divine Bridegroom. The black vestment is very appropriate to remind us of Calvary and make us bewail our sins, which were the real executioners of the God-Man. The Church is a loving mother, who cannot be insensible to the woes and trials of her children. She rejoices with the joyful and weeps with the afflicted. Therefore she uses black at the burial and in the Masses offered up for the repose of her deceased children.

From the foregoing it may be seen that the liturgical colors are the visible expressions of the sentiments which animate the Church during the holy sacrifice of the Mass. The priest, by the different liturgical colors, bears in a way the whole history of the Church on his shoulders—her trials and her victories, the virtues of Christ and of the saints, the sorrows and the joys of the faithful. They contribute powerfully to remove our thoughts from earthly things and to turn them heavenwards.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE LITURGICAL LANGUAGE.

THE Church has arranged in all their details the sacred vessels and the priestly vestments which should be used at the altar; she has by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost appointed how and in what manner the awful and unbloody sacrifice should be offered to God. So also she has prescribed with as much wisdom as discretion that Latin should be her language and that Mass be said in that tongue. It is true that the Church has left to some Eastern nations since their return to unity with Rome the language in which they had before worshipped. She did so as a benign mother, to facilitate the return of her separated children. History tells us that SS. Cyril and Methodius, after having converted the Slavonians, used and prescribed their language for the ecclesiastical offices. They did so probably because in those countries a sufficient num-

ber of priests could not be had who understood Latin, or to prevent those nations from returning to the Greek schism; probably for both reasons.

With a few exceptions Latin is the language of the Church. The Reformers of the sixteenth century, having abolished the real priesthood, proposed to found a religion without the sacrifice of the New Law. Even the pagan philosophers of old looked upon a religion without a sacrifice as an impossibility; it is like a body without a soul. But what the heathens understood, the so-called enlightened Reformers refused to admit. They had done away with the Mass, which for them was but idolatry. To cover their apostasy they had to do away also with the language in which the Mass had been offered from the time of the apostles. Mass, or what they substituted for it, had to be said in the national tongue, to instruct those present. They forgot that the Mass is not a sermon, nor the altar a pulpit, a confessional, or a school-bench. Catholics are instructed in sermons, lectures, etc., in their mother tongue, and enabled thereby to follow the priest at the altar and unite themselves with him. For the Reformers this should have been all that was needed. Supposing for a moment it were neces-

sary for the faithful to understand the priest at the altar, let us examine the consequences of such an arrangement. In that case the churches could not be larger than a good-sized hall; the altar should be in the middle of the church, and the priest would have to speak in a loud voice. The celebration of more than one Mass at the same time would be out of the question. No more organ-playing or singing then. Nor is that all. If there be no longer a liturgical language, the national language should of course take its place in religious services. There must be then as many different sorts of missals as there are languages; and, while living languages are subject to continual changes, the missals must share the same fate, for otherwise they would contain many false and ridiculous expressions. No priest could celebrate in a foreign country except he carry his own missal with him, and then again his foreign audience would not understand him. How should missionaries act in countries that have no written language, languages which it often takes them years to study to enable them to preach the word of God? Who among them would dare use in the holy sacrifice of the Mass his own translation? With-



out the infallible declaration of the Church he cannot with certainty believe that his translation is correct. Which language should a priest use when his audience is composed of representatives of five or six different nations, speaking no other language than their own? It is impossible for the priest to suit them all, for it is not given to every one to be understood in one language by people of all nations. It is therefore clear that the Church for very good reasons could not allow the national language to be used at the holy sacrifice.

Yet it is not arbitrarily that the Church adopted Latin as the language of religion. When the apostles went forth to preach the Gospel in the almost unlimited Roman Empire, they found most generally spoken the three languages in which the title of the cross had been written, viz.: Hebrew or Syro-Chaldaic, Greek, and Latin. Of the three the Latin soon obtained the preference, for it was the language of Rome, which then held sway over nearly the whole known world, and which was in the designs of God's providence destined to be the head of all Christian churches on earth. That language echoed alike in the dark catacombs of ancient



Rome and in the splendid basilicas of the Middle Ages. Martyrs and confessors without number, the priests of all times, have used Latin to offer the holy sacrifice, to pray, and to sing. As the Church is our mother, so is Latin the mother tongue of all the faithful. Latin expresses with greater force and beauty the feelings which animate the Church. Latin is a so-called dead language, not subject to incessant changes; it remains unchanged, and is a mark of the one true and unchangeable religion. One faith, one Church, one sacrifice, one liturgy, one liturgical language! This wonderful unity, which is the special prerogative of the Catholic Church, is a beautiful figure of the celestial Jerusalem, where angels and saints sing with one voice their eternal "Holy! Holy! Holy!" Latin is the language of Christendom; it is the language of the priests in their relations with the bishops, and of the bishops with the Pope; in Latin the Catholics of all nations understand one another. How beautiful and consoling it is for a Catholic to be able to follow the religious services in all the Catholic churches on earth, just as in his own native place! He may travel from one end of the earth to the

other: in Europe and in America, in Asia and in Africa, wherever there is a Catholic priest he will feel at home; if he has been instructed in his own mother tongue, he can everywhere follow the priest during the unbloody sacrifice.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE BEGINNING OF MASS.

THE "*Ordo Missæ*," or "Ordinary of the Mass," is that collection of prayers and ceremonies recurring in every Mass, and remaining unchanged, notwithstanding the different feasts of the ecclesiastical year. To form a clear idea of a Low Mass we must understand the ceremonies of High Mass, which is as the basis of all others. It might be asked, for instance, why the priest reads the epistle on one side of the altar and the gospel on the other; why for all praying and reading he should not rather remain in the middle of the altar. These actions do not form a necessary part of the sacrifice, and remind us of what happens in a High Mass. At High Mass the deacon sings the gospel on the left side, and the subdeacon the epistle on the right side of the altar, as will hereafter be explained. At a Low Mass the priest performs the duties of deacon and subdeacon, and takes the places as-

signed to these at High Mass. We must therefore often find in a Solemn Mass the reasons of different actions at a Low Mass. We are not prepared though to follow certain writers, who try to attach to all without exception a mystical meaning. Many minor particulars seem to have no other reason than convenience. Why is a missal-stand used, if not for the convenience of the priest? Why is a small cruet used at the Offertory for pouring water into the chalice, if not to prevent a too great quantity of water—and so on with a few other particulars? The sacrifice of the Mass is essentially the same as the sacrifice of the cross; we must represent to ourselves Our Saviour nailed to a cross and offering His blood to His heavenly Father in expiation of our sins. It would be, however, difficult, not to say impossible, to find in the different parts of the Mass all the particulars of the passion of Our Lord; but this is not needed.

The priest, having put on the ecclesiastical vestments in the vestry, wearing the berretta and bearing the chalice in his hands, proceeds slowly to the altar. At the foot of the altar he makes a profound reverence to the cross, or a genuflexion if the Blessed Sacrament be kept on the altar.

Then he ascends the altar-steps, spreads the corporal, whereon he places the chalice, opens the missal, returns to the middle, and descends from the altar. Before the altar, in the midst of the people, whose representative he is before God, and in union with them, he begins the holy sacrifice. He remembers, on the one hand, the infinite value of the offering and his own unworthiness, and, on the other, the greatest honor which this sacrifice brings to God, and the streams of grace which it showers over the whole Church. Were he to cast his eyes on his own nothingness and on the infinite value of the sacrifice only, he would perhaps not dare ascend the altar, but he remembers also the words of St. Bonaventure (*"De Præparatione ad Missam,"* c. 5). A priest who does not say Mass when he can deprives, as far as is in his power, the Blessed Trinity of the honor and glory which is due to it, the angels of joy, sinners of pardon, the just of grace and help, the souls in purgatory of a soothing in their pains, the Church of Christ of a special benefit, and his own self of a medicine and an antidote against daily sins and defects. He begins therefore in profound humility at the foot of the altar with the sign of the cross: "In the

name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." (These are the last words which our divine Saviour Himself taught us, when, on the point of ascending into heaven, He commissioned His apostles to go and teach all nations.) All present kneel down, sign themselves with the sign of the cross, and pronounce the same words. How beautiful to behold the great human family, gathered around the altar under the banner of the cross, offering together to Almighty God the unbloody renewal of the sacrifice of the cross! How could we more appropriately begin the holy mysteries than with the sign and the words which are the epitome of our faith, and by which we openly profess the great mysteries thereof: the unity of God, the trinity of Persons, and the mystery of our Redemption. Well penetrated with the reality of these great mysteries, which are as the centre of the holy sacrifice, it will not be difficult to assist with due respect.

After the sign of the cross, the priest says the antiphon: "I will go in to the altar of God: to God, who giveth joy to my youth," followed by Psalm xlii., which he recites alternately with the acolytes. The Church uses

in her liturgy the Psalms, on account of some special reference to her actions or intentions which these contain. The verse which serves as antiphon shows that David was in the prime of life when he composed that psalm. It was on his flight to escape the wrath of his son Absalom, far away from home, beset by dangers, longing for the Temple, wherein he found the joy of his youth. The Church tries to excite such sentiments in our hearts when, at the beginning of Mass, she repeats the mournful canticle of David. Loaded with the consequences of original sin, banished in this valley of tears, the priest prays with the faithful for assistance against all the interior and exterior enemies of their souls. Whence must that aid come if not from Him who is Light and Truth? David seems to wonder over the uneasiness of his soul, but he pacifies it with confidence in God, and therefore his words are partly a canticle of joy. This is the reason why this psalm is not recited in Masses of Requiem, because we pray then for the repose of a soul whose parting has left us in uncertainty and mourning. The psalm is also omitted from Passion Sunday to Easter, because all the thoughts of the Church are then



bent on the remembrance of the passion of her divine Bridegroom; hence there is no cause for joy.

The psalm is concluded, as are most of the liturgical prayers, with the little doxology: "Glory be to the Father and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, and is now, and ever shall be, world without end." SS. Basil and Anastasius, who flourished in the fourth century of the Christian era, speak of the first part of the doxology as being introduced into the sacred liturgy by the apostles themselves. The second part was added by a general council held in 529 against the Arians, who denied the consubstantiality of the Son. The priest repeats the antiphon and adds: "Our help is in the name of the Lord," signing himself at the same time with the sign of the cross, to show that in order to be worthy to go in to the altar of the Lord he must rely, not on his own merits, but on the help of the Almighty, help which he may justly hope for, through the merits of the Redeemer who died on the cross. The acolytes respond: "Who created heaven and earth," expressing the hope that the priest may rightly place his confidence on Him who

in His omnipotence can purify him of all stain and make him worthy to go in to the altar of the Lord.

Mindful of his own unworthiness and confiding in the help of the loving Father, who, with far more tenderness than the father of the prodigal son, receives in His arms every repentant sinner, the priest begins the confession of his sins—the *Confiteor*. This confession, although insufficient for the remission of mortal sin, should the soul be stained with any, remits, as do other sacramentals, venial sin. The *Confiteor* is composed of two parts: the first is a confession, the second a prayer. The priest confesses his guilt first to the Almighty, who is offended by sin; then to all the saints, that they may intercede for him and obtain for him the remission of his sins. Therefore he adds: “To the Blessed Mary ever virgin.” He has not directly offended the Blessed Virgin, but by offending her Son he has also indirectly offended her; that is why he also confesses his sins to her. Then he names the great and mighty Archangel St. Michael, who has been appointed by God to guard our souls, particularly at the hour of death. He confesses his guilt also to St.

John the Baptist, whom Jesus loved so well, and who was found worthy to be His precursor. St. John was the great preacher of penance for the remission of sins; the priest finds in him a mighty intercessor for the remission of his own sins. Then he confesses his sins "to the holy apostles Peter and Paul"—to St. Peter, to whom Christ intrusted the keys of the kingdom of heaven; to St. Paul, the great Apostle of the Gentiles, who more than others labored for the conversion of the heathens. Certain religious Orders have the privilege of adding the name of their holy founder. The Benedictines add St. Benedict, the Franciscans St. Francis, the Dominicans St. Dominic, etc. Finally, the priest directs his confession "to all the saints" and to all present; he acknowledges his sinfulness not only to those who are glorified in heaven, but also to all that are present with him. He does not rest satisfied by saying that he has sinned; he adds also in what manner, viz.: "in thought, word, and deed." These are the three ways in which man sins. He confesses to have sinned "through his fault, through his fault, through his most grievous fault." To express with the publican of the Gospel his sentiments of sorrow



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AT THE EPISTLE.



and repentance, he strikes his breast three times, while he acknowledges to have sinned through his own fault. Desiring to go in to the altar of the Lord free of all stain, again he turns to all glorified creatures and all present, that they may intercede for him and obtain the full remission of his sins. The acolytes answer in the name of all present: "May Almighty God have mercy upon thee, forgive thee thy sins, and bring thee to life everlasting." The priest, profoundly inclined, answers: "Amen." The acolytes, representing the congregation, who also need the remission of their sins, in their turn and with the same words as the priest, for themselves and in the name of all present, confess their faults, not to the brethren, but to the priest, whom they call father: "And to you, father." No one is authorized to change anything that the Church has ordered for the celebration of Mass. In the Confiteor the acolytes say simply: "And to you, father," without any other explicatives, not even at the Pope's Mass. After the confession of the acolytes, the priest makes for them the same supplication they had made for him. They answer with the Hebrew word "Amen," expressing thereby the desire



that the wish may be realized. Then follows a benediction, whereby the priest begs for himself and his brethren absolution and remission of his sins, signing himself at the same time with the sign of the cross.

After that the priest, bowing down again, but not so profoundly as for the Confiteor, says: "Thou wilt turn, O God, and bring us to life." The acolytes answer: "And Thy people shall rejoice in Thee." The priest continues: "Show us, O Lord, Thy mercy." The acolytes add: "And grant us Thy salvation." These verses are taken from Psalm lxxxiv., wherein David prays for a Messias to come. During Mass, before consecration, we expect the Saviour, just as the faithful of the Old Law before the Incarnation expected the promised Redeemer. We pray God that He may send the One through whom salvation is to come. After that the priest prays that the Lord may graciously hear his prayer, and, before ascending the altar-steps to converse more intimately with God, he addresses to the people the wish which the Church has borrowed from St. Paul: "The Lord be with you." The acolytes in the name of all present



reciprocate the same wish to the priest: "And with thy spirit." Let us remark here that the priest repeats the same wish seven times during Mass. Some pious writers represent thereby the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost.

At the moment of ascending the altar the priest, extending his hands and joining them again, says: "Let us pray." As often as these words occur during Mass, the same ceremony accompanies them; they are an invitation to prayer; to pray, we extend our hands to God who is in heaven. In this attitude did our divine Saviour pray on the cross. In the prayer which the priest says while ascending the altar-steps, he speaks in the plural, because not he alone is to go in to the altar of the Lord; the deacon and the subdeacon accompany and serve him. The dominating thought of the priest is still to purify himself more and more from his sins, in order to be worthy to enter into the Holy of Holies. If almost angelic purity was required from the high-priest in the Old Law, when he entered once a year into the Holy of Holies, what purity will not be demanded of the priest under the New Dispensation, of which the Old

Law was but the shadow? The nearer we come to God, the more we feel the least fault which stains the soul.

Bowing down in the middle of the altar, the priest says the following prayer: "We pray Thee, O Lord, by the merits of Thy saints whose relics here repose and of all the saints, that Thou vouchsafest to forgive my sins. Amen." When he mentions the saints whose relics repose in the altar-stone, he kisses the altar as a token of respect to the relics of those saints.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### INCENSATION, INTROIT, AND KYRIE.

THE altar represents Jesus Christ, as we have remarked before. The relics of the saints, which repose on the altar, remind us that the saints are members of Christ. After having taken our human nature unto Himself, He not only drank the chalice of His passion, rose glorious, and entered into heaven; He also established His Church upon earth. He is the Head of that mystic body, and the saints are its members. Our blessed Lord, as such, is perfect only when accompanied by His saints: and therefore the saints, who are united with Him in glory, are also united with Him in the altar, which represents Him.

Having venerated the relics of the saints, the priest turns round, in a Solemn Mass, to bless the incense. There are two incensations during Mass. The first time the priest incenses the altar; no prayer accompanies this incensation;

he incenses only the different parts of the altar, so that the altar be filled with a sweet odor. We learn from Holy Scripture that incense was in early use in the service of the Lord. In the Old Testament incense was a requisite to the sacrifice; repeatedly does the word occur in the ceremonies prescribed for the different offerings, as can be seen in Leviticus. The three wise men were the first in the New Testament to use incense in the service of the Lord. Holy Scripture expressly mentions that they brought incense, gold, and myrrh to honor the new-born King of the Jews. The Church has borrowed the ceremony of incensing from heaven, where St. John saw it practised. St. John in his Apocalypse (v. 8) saw round about the throne of the Almighty four-and-twenty ancients having every one of them golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints. The Church, the faithful spouse of the Lamb, endeavors to imitate as much as possible upon earth the doings of the heavenly spirits, and, availing herself of the circumstance that the beloved disciple has lifted a part of the veil of the unsearchable mysteries, she incenses the altar, as the angels do in heaven. Incense is especially a figure

of prayer; the words quoted from the Apocalypse indicate this. The priest at the altar offers to God the prayers of the faithful; their prayers united with his ascend then to the throne of the Almighty. But prayer is pleasing to God only when it comes from a pure heart and is the expression of a holy life; only when prayer is united to a holy life does it spread before the Lord a sweet odor. Incense is a striking figure of that union. Thus we say of devout and truly religious people that they died in the odor of sanctity; often also has God permitted that their sacred relics exhaled a sweet odor. Before the Introit, the altar and the priest only are incensed. First, the cross is incensed, or the Blessed Sacrament if it be exposed; then the relics of the saints if there be any on the altar, then the whole altar, and, lastly, the priest. The altar represents the God-Man, the clouds of incense the Divinity, which is concealed from our eyes. These clouds, as on Sinai and in the desert, are at the same time a figure of the glory of the Lord. The priest at the altar is the representative of Christ; his heart must be like an altar on which the fire of divine love burns. .

After the incensation the priest reads the *Introit*. The preceding prayers are a general preparation for Mass, and therefore they are always the same; the *Introit*, on the contrary, varies according to the different feasts of the ecclesiastical year; the *Introit* places in a few words the chief ideas of the same before the eyes of the faithful. At one time it transports our thoughts to heaven in company with the angels and the saints, then into purgatory with the suffering souls; at another time it proposes the unfathomable depths of the divine mysteries, then again the different vicissitudes of human life. We add a few examples to illustrate this meaning. The *Introit* of the third Mass on Christmas-day reads: "A Child has been born to us, and a Son has been given us. He bears on His shoulders the sign of His power, and He shall be called Angel of the great council." On Easter Sunday: "I am risen and I am still with Thee, alleluia. Thou hast extended Thy hand over me, alleluia; Thy wisdom has shown itself wonderfully, alleluia, alleluia." On Pentecost: "The Spirit of the Lord hath filled the whole world, alleluia! and that which containeth all things hath knowledge of the voice, alleluia, alle-

luia, alleluia!" On Assumption Day: "Let us rejoice in the Lord, celebrating a feast-day in honor of the Blessed Mary ever Virgin, for whose Assumption the angels rejoice and glorify the Lord." In Masses for the dead the Introit is as follows: "Eternal rest give to them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them." We see from this that the Introit gives us in a few words the feeling which animates the Church, and is as a key to the different mysteries and feasts of the ecclesiastical year. On the Introit follows immediately a verse taken from the Psalms. Formerly the whole psalm was either said or sung, and closed with the small doxology: "Glory be to the Father," etc. At present the Church takes one verse or more, followed by the doxology, which, as a general rule, ends the Psalms. This thanksgiving to the Blessed Trinity is here well in place; we profess thereby that the honor of the great action we are about to begin belongs to God alone. This joyful canticle is omitted in Masses for the dead and during passion time, for reasons already given.

After the feast of the day has been solemnly announced in the Introit, what could be more natural than for the soul to lift itself to the throne



of the Almighty, that His mercy may make it worthy to assist with proper dispositions at the holy mysteries? On the Introit follows, therefore, the *Kyrie Eleison*. This prayer is a cry for help, which the Church addresses to the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. The three first petitions are addressed to the Father, then three to the Son, and the last three to the Holy Ghost. The *Kyrie Eleison* shares with a few other Greek and Hebrew words, such as *Amen*, *Hosanna*, *Alleluia*, the privilege of being retained unchanged in the Latin missals. The Church has probably retained these words to show that the sacrifice of the New Law is one and the same for all nations. Latin, Greek, and Hebrew may be considered as the original languages from which the most of the other languages are derived; a beautiful figure of the calling of all nations to the true Church, of which the unbloody sacrifice is the centre. The Church has also retained those three languages in memory of the inscription on the cross, which was written in those languages. It is probable that those words have remained unchanged because it was deemed impossible to give by a translation their full import. The *Kyrie Eleison* is a short but beautiful and power-

ful prayer. We read in the life of St. Basil that he gathered on one occasion the faithful into the church to pray for the unfortunate Theophile, who in writing had given body and soul to the devil. Theophile prayed to be freed from that cruel slavery and to recover that awful document; but the devil laughed at him. St. Basil ordered that those present should extend their hands to heaven and repeat continually: "*Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison,*" until the devil should be forced to hand the writing to the saint. To us, poor pilgrims on earth, surrounded as we are by all sorts of dangers and trials, no prayer should be oftener on the lips than "*Kyrie eleison*"—"Lord, have mercy on us." Many saints, as St. Benedict in his Rule, call it simply, *Litania supplicatio*, because it is the supplication by excellence. This short prayer seems to be the most efficacious of all prayers, and to do violence to the heart of God. What was it that induced the Lord to grant sight to the blind man of Jericho, deliverance to the daughter of the woman of Cana, and health to the ten lepers, if not that short supplication: "*Kyrie eleison*"—"Lord, have mercy on us"? It sounds so natural on the lips of one who is in

danger or distress, and it expresses so well the sentiments of priests and faithful, when they consider their own unworthiness. Yet for this prayer to be efficacious, it should be said with the dispositions of the examples above mentioned, that is, with faith, humility, and confidence. We must remark, besides, that addressing the Father and the Holy Ghost we use "*Kyrie eleison*," and invoking the Son, "*Christe eleison*." Pope Innocent III. gives the reason: "If you ask me," he says, "why we do not say to the Son, *Kyrie eleison*, as to the Father and the Holy Ghost, I answer that in these there is but one and the same nature—the divine nature; whereas in the Son there are two natures—the divine nature and the human, because He is true God and true Man; the word *Christ* expresses *both*. This supplication, thrice repeated to each of the Three Divine Persons, shows our relation to the nine choirs of angels, who in heaven sing the praise of the Almighty. This union with the angels prepares us for the Angels' Canticle, which follows.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE GLORIA AND THE COLLECTS.

To intone the *Gloria in excelsis Deo*, the priest returns to the middle of the altar, extends his hands, and joins them again, while at the same time he makes an inclination to the cross or to the Blessed Sacrament, if it be exposed. Since the Gloria is a canticle of joy, it is omitted on days devoted to sorrow and penance, or which have not otherwise a festal character; also in Masses for the dead. The Gloria in Excelsis is generally called the *Hymnus Angelicus*, or Angels' Canticle, because the angels intoned it at the birth of the Saviour, as the Gospel expressly mentions. When Jesus was born at Bethlehem shepherds in the neighborhood were keeping night-watches over their flocks, and behold! a heavenly messenger appears to them, probably the Archangel Gabriel, and brings to them the joyful tidings of the birth of the Messiah. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude

of the heavenly army, praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will." The sense of this canticle is: in the highest heavens, by the angelic choirs God is praised for giving His Son as Redeemer; and on earth is granted thereby reconciliation with God to mankind, the object of His good-will. This canticle is one of the oldest in the ecclesiastical liturgy. The first part of it is as old as Christianity. It is, however, not known for certain who is the composer of the rest. Some ascribe it to St. Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers, who lived in the fourth century; others to St. Telesphorus, who occupied the chair of St. Peter in the second century; others, again, believe that this canticle was introduced into the liturgy by the apostles themselves. Inspired by the same spirit, the Church continues to sing that sublime canticle of praise, the first words of which were sung by the angels. We add a short paraphrase of the Gloria:

"Glory be to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will." These are the words of the angels: Glory be to God and peace and blessing from the Lord to men who were before children of wrath. In the beginning of the canti-

cle the Church addresses God, without making distinction of persons; imitating the angels, she continues for a while in the same tone: "We praise Thee," because all praise belongs to Thee. "We bless Thee," that is, we offer to Thee our thanks, which we owe Thee for Thy benefits. "We adore Thee" for Thy infinite majesty. "We glorify Thee" because Thou hast created and redeemed us. "We give thanks to Thee because of Thy great glory." The question might be put here, why we give thanks to God; a thanksgiving supposes a benefit, which is not mentioned apparently in this verse. The words, however, "of Thy great glory," contain the motives of our gratitude. God places His honor in doing good to us. The Incarnation is the greatest benefit which God bestowed on men; it is therefore His greatest glory. That is why the Church says: "We give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory." The praises of the Word Incarnate glorify God more than all creation could. We thank God for it, because the Son of God became man for us. This exposition agrees with the doctrine of St. Paul (Rom. iii. 23): "All have sinned, and do need the glory of God." "O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father



Almighty." The Church now directly addresses the Father. First she considered the unity of God, now the trinity of Persons, and, lifting up her voice to the First Person, who is the Source of the other two Persons, she exclaims: "God the Father Almighty." Then she turns to her Bridegroom, to whom nearly all the rest of the canticle is devoted. She calls Him first, "Lord, the only-begotten Son," and she adds the name, which He as creature deserved, "Jesus Christ." But she does not forget that He is God; she affirms it expressly: "Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father." Yea! her Bridegroom is God; He is also the Lamb of God, as St. John the Baptist called Him; He is, besides, the Son of the eternal Father. In her enthusiasm the Church searches for the titles which she can apply to her Bridegroom, and finds her delight in repeating them one after another. "Who takest away the sins of the world." Since Thou hast deigned to redeem us by Thy blood, now that Thou art exalted in glory do not abandon us, but "have mercy on us." The Church repeats once more: "Who takest away the sins of the world." If He, the Lamb of God and the Son of the Father, takes away our sins, what have we





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AT THE GOSPEL.



to fear? The Church understands this so well that she repeats it twice, first praying for mercy and then beseeching Him to lend a compassionate ear to the prayer of His spouse: "Hear our prayer." After the Church has considered her Bridegroom as the Lamb of God, who has taken upon Himself the sins of mankind, she climbs to the very heights of heaven, and sees Him who is the object of her love and praises seated at the right hand of the Father. There she venerates in God all holiness, all justice, all greatness. Once more, however, she prays for mercy: "Thou who sittest at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us." The Church then adds: "For thou only art holy. Thou only art the Lord, Thou only art most high, O Jesus Christ." All these fervent prayers and ejaculations are as so many bounds by which the Church hastens to her Bridegroom. After having carefully enumerated His glorious prerogatives, she adds: "With the Holy Ghost in the glory of God the Father." Here mention is made of the Blessed Trinity, and while the priest says these words he makes on himself the sign of the cross, by which act we make an outward profession of our faith in the great mysteries of the Trinity

and the Incarnation. The praises which the Church sings to Christ apply equally to the two other Persons, for they also are holy, Lord, and most high. In this glorious, praise-laden canticle all is equally sublime and simple.

After having recited the Gloria, the priest kisses the altar as a token of his union with Christ and the saints, whose relics repose on the altar. Then he turns around, slowly extends his hands, and joins them again, saying at the same time: "The Lord be with you." Once before he expressed this wish to the acolytes, when at the foot of the altar he was preparing to ascend it; then it meant only a farewell greeting to those who had prayed with him. This time the Church uses these words in another sense, viz., to excite the attention of the faithful to the prayer which follows, wherein the priest offers the wishes and prayers of the congregation collectively. Instead of "*Dominus vobiscum*"—"The Lord be with you," the bishops say: "Peace be to you"—"*Pax vobis*." Most befitting are these words in the mouth of a bishop. On account of the fulness of power which he has received through the episcopal consecration, he represents, more perfectly than the priest, Christ, who brought peace

on earth, and who after His glorious ascension left the same to His disciples, saying: "Peace be to you." To the bishop in particular it belongs to communicate to the faithful that peace which the world cannot give. The *Pax vobis* is a sequel to the Gloria, and is therefore replaced by the *Dominus vobiscum* in the Masses in which no Gloria is said. The *Collect* is still preceded by another short invitation to prayer: "*Oremus*,"—"Let us pray," which means: Let us pray with the Church and as much as possible in the church, because the common prayer, with the Church and in the church, is omnipotent with God, says St. John Chrysostom. The prayer which follows is called *Collecta*, from the Latin word *colligere*, to gather or to collect. The Church puts great stress on that prayer; she orders that it be said aloud and listened to by the faithful with attention. The canons in cathedrals turn towards the altar, and in monasteries the monks make a profound inclination while the priest says or sings the Collect. The acolytes (at High Mass, the choir) answer "Amen," which means: Yes! that is what we pray for and we cordially approve all that has been said. The priest says the Collect with extended arms, imi-

tating thereby the manner of praying of the first Christians. As Our Lord prayed on the cross with extended arms, so did the first Christians.

The Collects, like the other prayers of Mass, generally begin in the name of the Father and are concluded in the name of the Son. The Church does what the Saviour expressly teaches: "If you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it you" (John xvi. 23). The priest therefore prays that the desired favor may be granted "through Our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son," in whom the Father is well pleased and to whom He could not refuse a request, "and who liveth and reigneth with Thee in unity of the Holy Ghost, world without end." The faithful by the response "Amen" show that they share the sentiments expressed by the priest. To the Collect of the day are often added other prayers, either because that day is also the feast of other saints, or because on particular occasions they are prescribed by the Pope or the bishops, or because on certain days this is left to the option of the priest. Yet in general these prayers must be uneven in number and not exceed seven. The uneven number signifies the indivisibility of the divine substance. One signifies the unity

of God; three, the Blessed Trinity and the prayer of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemani, where He repeated three times the selfsame prayer; five, the five wounds of the Saviour; seven, the holy sacraments or the Lord's Prayer, in which by seven supplications we ask from God all we may desire.



## CHAPTER X.

### EPISTLE, GRADUAL, TRACT, AND SEQUENCE.

IN the preceding chapters it has been clearly shown that in the offering of holy Mass everything has a reason and is in order. The priest has now expressed the wishes and desires of the congregation, and presented them to God; the Church has spoken by his mouth. After a little while we will hear in the Gospel the word of the Master, but the Church prepares us for it by the word of the servant. That is why the *Epistle* comes first; the apostle or the prophet prepares us for the teaching of the Lord and Master. An epistle was read at divine service in the very first ages of Christianity. The apostles had been commissioned to spread the law of the Gospel over the whole earth; their word had to penetrate to the extreme limits thereof. This prevented them from taking up their abode in any one place. As soon as they had gained the inhabitants of a country to the true faith, they

went elsewhere to win new disciples for Christ. In the mean time they did not forget those whom they had converted already; they corresponded with them by letter. Therein they replied to their questions, announced new points of doctrine, refuted errors which might have crept in, endeavored to uproot abuses and excite the faithful to greater fervor. These letters were sent back and forth from one place to another. St. Paul orders this expressly in his Epistle to the Colossians (iv. 16): "When this epistle shall have been read with you, cause that it be read also in the Church of the Laodiceans: and that you read that which is of the Laodiceans." The same apostle writes to the Thessalonians (I, v. 27): "I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren." Although St. Paul does not clearly say that this reading had to take place during Mass, yet this may be deducted from the fact, as Cardinal Bona and Pope Benedict XIV. observe, that we do not read of any other gatherings of the faithful than for the celebration of the holy mysteries. We may then rightfully admit that the practice of reading a passage from the prophets or an epistle was introduced by the apostles themselves. Tertul-

lian and St. Augustine testify that not only the letters of the apostles, but also passages from the Old Testament, in particular the writings of the prophets, were read. This reading was an instruction and had to comprehend both the Old and the New Testament. The Old was a figure of the New, and the New was the illustration and fulfilment of the Old. Our Saviour more than once quoted the testimony of the Old Testament. The Epistle is always preceded by a few words which indicate that in the intention of the Church it is meant to be a reading; for instance: "Reading of the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans;" "Reading of the Prophet Isaias," etc. The Church selects for every day an epistle which closely refers to the feast of the day. It is easy to imagine how happy the first Christians must have felt when they received a letter from one of the apostles in a distant country. The letter was read in the church, and all expressed their contentment by a hearty "*Deo gratias*"—"Thanks be to God." The Church has preserved this beautiful custom; the acolyte, therefore, answers at the end of the Epistle, in the name of all present: "*Deo gratias*"—"Thanks be to God." At the gatherings of the first Chris-

tians, the bishop charged one of the audience with the reading of the Epistle; this was the office of the subdeacon. After reading the Epistle the subdeacon presents the book closed to the priest; the priest puts his hand on it, which the subdeacon kisses; this signifies that Christ, whom the priest represents, is, according to St. John, the Lamb, to whom it is given to unseal the Book which contains His holy mysteries.

On the Epistle follows the *Gradual*. The Gradual is composed of an antiphon and a verse, generally taken from the Psalms or from other places of Scripture; sometimes it is of ecclesiastical composition. The Gradual is the most musical part of the office; and as it was difficult to sing, the singing of it was intrusted to two only. They sung it from a sort of marble pulpit, and it is on account of the steps which they had to ascend that this song is called Gradual. So we call Gradual Psalms those which the Jews sang when ascending the steps of the Temple.

The Gradual is followed by the *Alleluia* or the *Tract*. Alleluia is repeated as an antiphon and followed by a verse, after which Alleluia is repeated a third time. The Hebrew word Alleluia means "Let us praise the Lord." We must ob-

serve, however, that the Hebrew word Alleluia had with the Hebrews a far wider signification than the Latin *Laudate Deum* conveys; that is why the Church has deemed it advisable not to replace Alleluia by a Latin word. We read in the Apocalypse (chap. xix.) that Alleluia is one of the words which echo day and night in the celestial Jerusalem. This canticle of joy had to have its place in the holy sacrifice of Mass. It is omitted on days of penance from Septuagesima to Easter, and also in Masses for the dead. It is then replaced by the *Tract*, which is so called because it is sung in a slow and mournful way; for it is rather a canticle of penance than of joy. The Tract is composed of one or more verses, sometimes even of a whole psalm, as, for instance, on the first Sunday of Lent; these verses follow one another without repetition; this is also probably a reason why it is called Tract.

On a few great feast-days, and in Masses for the dead, the Alleluia or Tract is followed by the *Sequence*. The Sequence dates back to about the ninth century. As its name indicates, the Sequence is a following of the preceding Alleluia or Tract, and consisted originally of notes without words. The idea must have been to express the in-

ability of the language of poor mortals to render by words the happiness of the blessed. Later on words were adapted to the melody, the merits of which seem to be attributed to the renowned Benedictine, Notkerus of St. Gall, who was appointed Bishop of Liège, and died in 912. By degrees all the great feasts of the year and the Sundays of Advent came to have their own Sequence. After the reformation of the Roman Missal under Pope Pius V., only four were kept. The oldest and the model of all others is the Sequence of Easter—*Victimæ Paschali*—a sweet melodrama, which in inimitable simplicity and natural beauty expresses the joy of Magdalen and of the faithful. Next is the Sequence of Pentecost—*Veni Sancte Spiritus* (Come, Holy Ghost)—a beautiful canticle, which could have been composed only by a heart wholly burning with the fire of the Holy Ghost. The whole canticle is a chain of pious supplications to the Holy Ghost, wherein on the one hand His sanctifying influence is depicted in vivid colors, and on the other hand the different necessities of our earthly pilgrimage are clearly and simply expressed. The third Sequence is the one of Corpus Christi—*Lauda Sion Salvatorem* (Praise, O



Sion, thy Saviour)—composed by the Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas Aquinas. The sublimity of thought competes with the loveliness and elegance of form. The last Sequence which Pius V. kept in the Roman Missal is the *Dies Iræ* (Day of Wrath). Nothing can be more impressive than the *Dies Iræ* in its sublime simplicity. The soul seems to hear therein the trumpet of the Last Judgment. As far as contents and form are concerned, this canticle is a perfect masterpiece. It is, in the opinion of great poets, the highest point that human intelligence ever reached in poetry. Subsequently another Sequence was added to the four authorized by Pius V., that of the Seven Dolors of the Blessed Virgin—*Stabat Mater*—wherein the Church in touching terms depicts the sorrows of the Virgin Mother under the cross of her Son on Calvary. A few religious Orders have, in addition to the above, a proper Sequence for the feast of their holy founders.



## CHAPTER XI.

### THE GOSPEL.

AFTER the priest has said the Alleluia, Tract, or Sequence, the missal is taken to the other side of the altar for a twofold reason. In the beginning of Christianity the faithful offered the bread and wine for the sacrifice. Before the Offertory these were placed on the altar on the epistle side; this made it necessary that the missal should be taken to the other side. Although this custom has been discontinued, the rubric has remained of removing the book before the Gospel. But there is another symbolic reason for it. By the epistle side are represented the Jews, by the gospel side the Christians. The epistle is read on the left side of the altar, because the word of God had been intrusted first to the Jews; the book is then carried over to the other side to signify that the light of faith has passed from the Jews to the Gentiles. At the end of Mass the book is again taken over to the epistle side,

because at the end of the world the Jewish people will be enlightened and recognize Christ as the true Messias. When treating of the altar we observed that, according to the ordinances of the Church, the altar should be, when possible, turned to the east; the epistle side is consequently to the south and the gospel side to the north. This proves that the mystic signification which we attributed to that rubric is the true one, for in the cold dark north has the prince of darkness fixed his throne (Is. xiv. 13). From the north shall an evil break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land (Jerem. i. 14). This applies to the unconverted heathens, not to those who embraced Christianity.

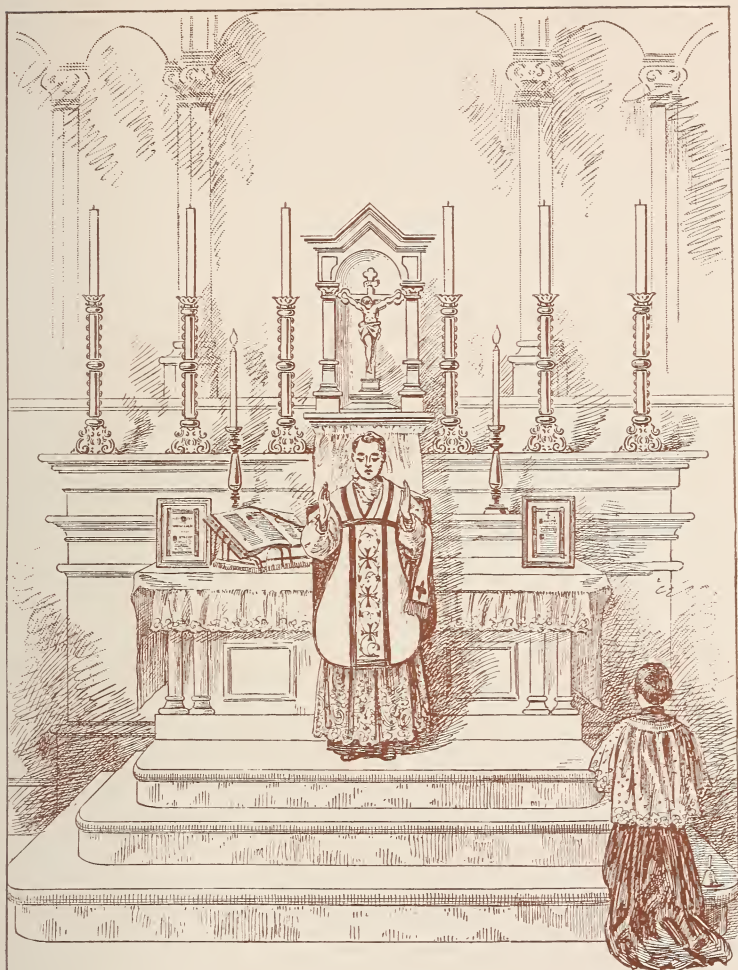
While the missal is being carried over, the priest goes to the middle of the altar, and, bowing down profoundly, he addresses to God the following prayer: "Purify my heart and my lips, Almighty God, Thou who hast purified with a burning coal the lips of the Prophet Isaias; vouchsafe in Thy kind mercy so to purify me that I may worthily announce Thy holy Gospel. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen." In this prayer the Church alludes to a vision of the Prophet Isaias (vi. 1-8). "In the year that King Ozias died," he

says, "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and elevated: and His train filled the Temple. Upon it stood the seraphim: . . . And they cried one to another and said: Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of hosts, all the earth is full of His glory. . . . And I said: Wo is me, because I have held my peace, because I am a man of unclean lips. . . . And one of the seraphim flew to me, and in his hand was a live coal, which he had taken with the tongs off the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: Behold, this hath touched thy lips, and thy iniquities shall be taken away, and thy sin shall be cleansed. And I heard the voice of the Lord saying: Whom shall I send, and who shall go for us? And I said: Lo, here am I, send me." What a beautiful figure of the true preacher of the Gospel in the New Testament! This explains why the priest addresses himself so humbly to God in that prayer, because God alone can in a supernatural way make weak man worthy to announce His Gospel.

After this prayer the priest asks God's blessing, saying: "Vouchsafe, O Lord, to bless me," and, expressing the blessing he prays for, he says: "The Lord be in my heart and on my lips that I may worthily and lawfully announce His Gospel.

Amen." The priest then proceeds to the gospel side and says: "The Lord be with you;" he does not turn around to the people, because he is partly turned to the congregation. The reading of the Gospel is preceded by this wish, to express that the word of God will never bear fruit in a soul except by God's blessing. Then the priest announces to the people from what evangelist the Gospel of the day is taken: "Beginning [or Sequence] of the Holy Gospel according to St. N." He adds the name of the evangelist to draw the closer attention of the faithful to it.

While the priest says these words, he makes with the thumb the sign of the cross on the first words of the Gospel, to signify that the Gospel or the teaching of Christ receives from the mystery of the cross the power whereby it converts the world, and also that the words of the Gospel are the words of Him who died on the cross. The priest then also makes the sign of the cross upon his forehead, upon his mouth, and upon his breast. Upon his forehead, to show that he must never be ashamed to profess the teaching of Christ, for he knows that "he who shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him the Son of man shall be ashamed" (Luke ix. 26). Upon



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AT THE DOMINUS VOBISCUM BEFORE THE OFFERTORY.





his mouth, to signify that he is prepared to confess the word of Christ courageously, that is, to preach, with St. Paul, Jesus crucified. "Every one that shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. x. 32). Upon his breast, to show that this exterior confession echoes his interior disposition, "for with the heart we believe unto justice" (Rom. x. 10). While the Gospel is said or sung, the priest and the faithful always stand. This practice is of the oldest antiquity, and shows the respect which we should have for the word of God. We read in the Old Testament that when Esdras read the law to the people, he and all the people *stood* (2 Esdr. viii.). St. Luke relates that, according to His custom, our divine Saviour went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day; and *He rose up* to read (Luke iv. 16). And when He had folded the book He restored it to the minister and sat down. St. Benedict prescribes in his Rule that when the abbot at Matins reads the Gospel all should stand, as a token of respect. After the priest has concluded the reading of the Gospel, the acolytes answer in the name of all present: "Praise be to Thee, O Christ," by which we tender to God our grateful



thanks for the instruction imparted to us. The priest, in token of love and respect for the word of God, kisses the first words of the Gospel, saying at the same time: "By the words of the Gospel may our sins be blotted out," viz., our venial sins, for the remission of which the attrition of the heart is sufficient.

These ceremonies take place at every Low Mass; we must add a few particulars regarding Solemn Mass. In a Solemn Mass, after the singing of the Epistle, the deacon takes the book of the Gospels and places it on the altar. This is meant to signify that the sacrifice of the New Law is intimately connected with the Gospel and that the one will never be without the other; where the Gospel is preached there also will the sacrifice be offered to God, and *vice versa*. The priest then blesses the incense; it belongs to him to bless and sanctify material things for the service of God. The deacon, kneeling and profoundly bowing down, says the prayer: "Purify my heart," etc.; after that he takes the Gospel-book from the altar. The altar represents Christ; He is the Head of the Catholic or Universal Church; to her He has intrusted His word; to her it belongs to give us the true

interpretation of it. With the Gospel-book in his hands the deacon kneels before the priest, asks his blessing, and kisses his hand to show that nobody should take to himself the honor to preach the word of God unless called and sent by Him whom the priest represents and whose doctrine he is to announce. The deacon, preceded by three acolytes, two with lighted candles and the third carrying the censer, proceeds to the place where the Gospel is to be sung. Thereby is represented that Christ sent two of His disciples to every place which He was Himself to visit, and where by the light of miracles and the sweet odor of virtues they were to prepare the way for the Lord. After the Gospel the subdeacon carries the book open to the priest, in whose name the deacon sung the Gospel; after that the deacon incenses him. The priest is the interpreter of the infallible teaching of the Church, he is the lawful minister of the word of God; that is why this solemn token of respect is given to him here.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE CREDO.

THAT part of Mass which we have explained in the preceding chapters was formerly called the "Mass of the catechumens;" the catechumens, the public penitents, and the possessed were allowed to assist at it. After the Gospel or the sermon all these had to leave the church; the doors were closed, and then began the "Mass of the faithful." In consequence of the general spreading of Christianity and the discontinuation of public penances, that distinction has lost much of its meaning. The Mass proper of the faithful begins with the *Credo*. The Credo is a profession of faith which very properly follows the Gospel, since our faith is grounded on the infallible word of God. The Credo is said on all the Sundays of the year; on the feast-days of the apostles, who preached the faith; on the feasts of the doctors, who illustrated it by their writings; on the feast of St. Mary Magdalen, who

first of all believed in the Resurrection, announced it to the apostles, and was an apostle to the apostles themselves; on the feasts of the holy angels, because the words, "Creator of all things *invisible*," apply to them; on the feasts of the Blessed Virgin, because the Credo more than once mentions her. The Credo is said besides on the feast of the dedication of a church and of patron saints, because it is supposed that on those days there is a great concourse of people. For the same reason the Credo is also said on the feast of a saint of whom the church in which Mass is said possesses a great relic.

The profession of faith said at Mass is not the one of the apostles, but the one of Nice, or, more correctly, of Nice and Constantinople, because the words regarding the Holy Ghost were inserted in the first Council of Constantinople against Macedonius. Up to the eleventh century the Credo was not, apparently, said so generally nor so solemnly in the Roman Church. St. Henry, Emperor of Germany, during his stay in Rome, expressed his astonishment at this to Pope Benedict VIII. The Pope explained to him that the Roman Church, unstained as it was by heresy, had not to repeat so often the pro-

fession of faith, showing thereby the purity of her faith. After more mature consideration, however, upon the remark passed by the holy emperor, it was decided that the Credo should be said on Sundays in the Roman Church, and, to add more solemnity to the profession, the announcement should be from the chair of St. Peter.

The profession of faith of Nice is more explicit than the one of the apostles, although the latter contains all the fundamental truths of religion. Subsequently, as heresies arose, it was deemed necessary to amplify the points attacked, and thus error was crushed as it appeared. We add a short explanation of the different articles of faith proposed in the Credo.

“I believe in one God.”—The apostles did not add the word *one*, because it was not thought necessary in their days. It was added in the Ecumenical Council of Nice against the Arians, to affirm the divine unity of essence and trinity of persons. Why do we say, “I believe in God,” and not rather “I believe God”? Why the preposition *in*? It is very important. Faith is a motion of the soul to God; faith united to charity, which is the only faith that will avail us to life

eternal, tends of its nature to God. We may know God in two ways. A man, for instance, considering the component parts of the universe,—the earth, with an infinite variety of plants, the firmament with its innumerable stars—at the consideration of all these wonders arranged with so much order and perfection, is forced to confess that some one created all this; he calls it a reasonable truth. Were he to think otherwise he would show that he resembles irrational creation. This is called knowing God by reason. But to believe in God, inasmuch as He is triune in person, it is necessary that He reveal it to us and that we accept His word by faith. God proposes to me a truth by the instrumentality of His Church; I renounce immediately my own judgment, and accept as truth what He deigns to reveal. In this manner we believe in God.

“Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.”—There are heretics who dare assert that the creation of all things visible must not be ascribed to God; they pretend that the world owes its existence to itself. We condemn with the Council of Nice that absurd doctrine by acknowledging God creator of heaven

and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. We profess thereby also our belief in the creation of the angels, who are invisible yet substantial beings.

“And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God.”—The word *one* is necessary here for the reason that we believe in *one*, not in two sons. The divine and human natures in Christ do not form two persons. Christ is but one person, the only-begotten Son of God. Why does the Church call Him Lord, which title she did not add when speaking of the Father? It is because we belong to Christ in a particular way. He has created us in union with the Father, who created all by His word (John 1.). We belong to Him because He has redeemed us by His blood, and freed us from the slavery of Satan; we are His in more respects than one. Reason itself could not teach us that in God there is one Father and one Son; to know this it was necessary that we should see God as He is, or that He reveal Himself to us. As we believe in one Father, so do we believe in one Son.

“And born of the Father before all ages.”—Time begins with creation; without time there can be no ages, and without the existence of



created beings no time. Before all ages, before anything had been created, is the Son. The created world also comes forth from God, but is not for this reason God. The Son of God, on the contrary, born of the Father, is like to the Father, so that all that is said of the Father may also be applied to the Son, with the exception of His divine paternity only; the Son is one in essence with the Father. But how can the Son have the same substance as the Father, without change to the latter? St. Athanasius explains the difficulty by a striking comparison. As a candle, he says, taking its light from another candle of the same sort, does not alter the latter, so also the Son, by taking His substance from the Father, does not alter this divine substance, which He has in common with the Father, for He is truly and indeed "God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God."

"Begotten, not made."—All human beings are made; we are the work of God; the angels, and even the Blessed Virgin, are no exceptions. The Son of God is begotten, not made. When speaking of God, we must not lose sight of the distinction of persons and the unity of substance. The Saviour Himself has said: "I and the Father are

one;" they are one and the same, only differing in person, which distinction is expressed by Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The Council of Nice expresses that unity of nature and substance by "consubstantial with the Father."

"By whom all things were made."—In the beginning of the Credo it is said that God created heaven and earth and all things; when speaking of the Son, it is said that all things are made by Him. How can these agree? A comparison explains it. Three different faculties are required by the soul for her different operations, viz., power, intelligence, and will. By her power the soul operates; but this action presupposes intelligence and will. So has God the Almighty Father created all in His omnipotence. He has created all with intelligence by the Son, in union with His will by the Holy Ghost; thereby is the action complete. Therefore we justly say, when speaking of the Son: "By whom all things were made."

"Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven."—The Second Person of the Blessed Trinity came upon earth not only for men, but to redeem men from eternal grief; in other words, to work out their salvation. There-

fore He came down from heaven, without, however, leaving the Father and the Holy Ghost, without depriving Himself of the blessedness of the divinity. He has united to Himself humanity, and in His sacred humanity He endured all the sufferings which men can endure. He came down from heaven to conceal Himself in a creature, to live among us, to converse with us, and to subject Himself to the exigencies of human nature.

“And became incarnate by the Holy Ghost,” that is, by the operation of the Holy Ghost. God has created all things, and we have seen what part the Three Divine Persons have taken in the creation. In the mystery of the Incarnation all Three Divine Persons co-operate. The Father sends His Son; the Son comes down from heaven, and the Holy Ghost works this sublime wonder.

“Of the Virgin Mary.”—Let us well consider those words. Mary gave Him the substance of His human being, of that being which is personal to Him. There is in Christ but one person, and consequently Mary is the Mother of God. How pure must the ever-blessed Virgin have been to be found worthy of becoming the Mother

of God! The Word would not unite Himself to a human creature which had been taken from nothingness, but wished to belong to the race of Adam. Therefore He assumed human nature in the womb and of the substance of Mary, who suffered no detriment thereby to her virginity.

“And was made man.”—The Word of God not only assumed the likeness of man, but was made man indeed. These sublime words express the union of the divinity with humanity. The priest kneels when he pronounces these words, showing thereby his profound respect for the mystery of the Incarnation.

“He was crucified also for us, suffered under Pontius Pilate, and was buried.”—“The Apostles’ Creed” contains the same words. They did not content themselves by saying that He died for us, because it was important that all should ever have before the eyes of their mind the victory of the cross over Satan. As we had been lost by the tree, or rather the fruit thereof, so also does our salvation come from the tree of the cross. The cunning of the enemy had to be confounded by itself; the remedy had to be provided from the source whence the devil had taken his deadly

poison, as the Church so beautifully expresses it in the hymn "Vexilla Regis." The apostles, therefore, expressly added of what death the Saviour of mankind died; they glorified in knowing and preaching nothing but Jesus crucified. As Jesus came down from heaven for us, so also He was crucified *for us*. The name is given of the Roman governor during whose administration He suffered, to give us the time when that great mystery of God's love to man was accomplished. Christ suffered and died, and was also to be buried; for how otherwise could His prophecy be fulfilled that He would rise again the third day? The burial had to prove that His was not an apparent death, but a real death.

"And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures."—Jonas in particular had foretold it. The Saviour Himself had said: "This wicked generation asks a sign, and no other sign shall be given it than the sign of the prophet Jonas. For even as Jonas had been three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so would the Son of man remain part of three days in the bosom of the earth."

"And ascended into heaven."—The Word of God came upon earth to assume human nature,

but did not leave for that the happiness of heaven. When we say that He ascended into heaven, this must be understood of his sacred humanity.

“Sitteth at the right hand of the Father,” as Lord and Master with the Father. This honor belonged to Him from all eternity as God. These words then indicate that the same honor is due to His human nature. So it had to be, since the human nature is united to the divine nature in the same person.

“And He is to come again with glory to judge the living and the dead.”—In regard to Our Lord, Holy Scripture speaks of two comings. In the first He appears without glory; “He emptied Himself,” as St. Paul expresses it (Phil. ii. 7), “taking the form of a servant.” In His second coming He will appear with great majesty and glory, not as Redeemer, but as a severe Judge. He will come to judge not only those who lived upon earth immediately before the general destruction, but also those who died since the beginning of the world, because all without exception shall be judged.

“Of whose kingdom there shall be no end.”—This refers to the kingdom of Christ in His



humanity, for in His divinity He has never ceased to reign.

“And in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Life-giver.”—The Holy Ghost is Lord, like the two other persons of the Blessed Trinity; but He is called in particular Life-giver. Even as the soul gives life to the body, so does the Holy Ghost give life to the soul. By sanctifying grace, which He infuses into her, He enlivens her, supports her, and enables her to grow in love. The working, however, of the Life-giver shines forth with greater brilliancy in the Church. He supports her, and makes all her members, however different in race, language, and customs, live of the same life, and belong to the same mystic body, of which Christ is the Head.

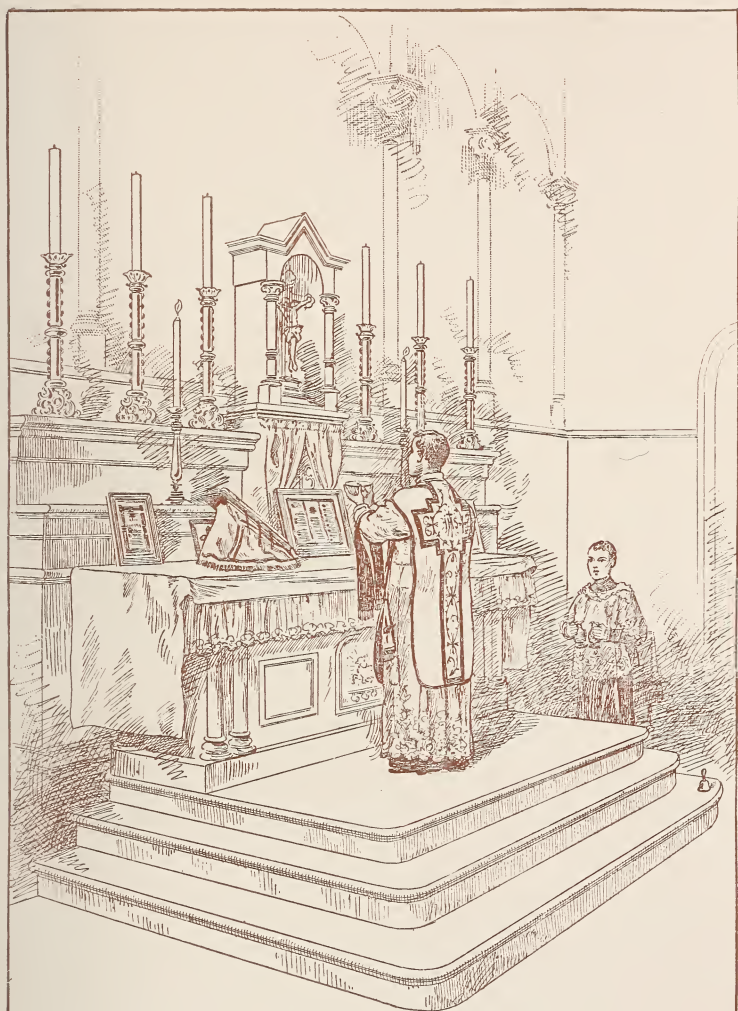
“Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son.”—In the Council of Nice the Fathers only discussed the doctrinal articles concerning Jesus Christ. The Council of Constantinople decided to perfect the Nicene Creed by adding what regards the Holy Ghost, except the “*Filioque*”—“and from the Son.” The Fathers of that council thought it sufficient to say: “Who proceedeth from the Father.” In their estimation no future heretic could call into doubt the fact that the



Holy Ghost proceeded also from the Son, since He Himself had promised to His apostles before His ascension that He would send them the Holy Ghost. But the Greeks subsequently contested that truth, and, by denying that the Holy Ghost proceeded from the Son, they had to deny also, if they did not wish to contradict themselves openly, all faith in the mystery of the Holy Trinity. The Blessed Trinity is united in the Three Divine Persons in the following manner: The First Person engenders the Second; the First and the Second are united by the Third. To deny that union is to deny the whole mystery. To take away all occasion for doubt the "*Filioque*" ("and the Son") was added to the Nicene Creed in the eighth century.

"Who together with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified."—The true faith demands of us that we not only honor the Holy Ghost, but adore Him, as we adore the Father and the Son. The Church directs that we bow the head when pronouncing these words, to pay our homage to the Holy Ghost, whose divinity we profess. Inseparable from the Father and the Son, the Holy Ghost is glorified with them.

"Who spoke by the prophets."—The Church



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AT THE OFFERING OF THE HOST.



has added this article to her profession of faith to confound the Marcionites, who imagined that there was a good and a bad God. According to them, the God of the Jews was not the good one. The Church by declaring that the Holy Ghost has spoken by the prophets, from Moses to the last of them, professes that the influence of the Holy Ghost has made itself felt on earth from the very beginning. On Pentecost day He came down upon the apostles, and He came upon earth to abide permanently; because His mission is different from that of the Saviour. The Word Incarnate came upon earth, but in the course of time ascended again into heaven. The Holy Ghost came to stay, as the Saviour Himself testifies when He says to His apostles: "He, the Father, will send you the Holy Ghost, that He may remain with you forever." The Church has to be taught, guided, and directed. According to the Saviour's word, the Holy Ghost will assist her to the end of time. After having proposed to us the principal points which we are to believe regarding the Blessed Trinity, the Creed adds another article, which is to confirm our faith in all that precedes.

"And one Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic

Church.”—The reader will observe that we do not say, “I believe *in* a Church,” as we said, “I believe *in* one God.” The faith which has God for its immediate object is a motion of the soul to God; but all other objects which refer to God, and tend to lead us to Him, we simply believe. To preclude all doubt regarding the true Church of Christ, four marks are added to distinguish her from all others. She is one; that is, a moral body, whose members at all times and in all places profess the same faith, are governed by the same Head, and whose union is cemented by the same sacraments and the same sacrifice. She is holy; that is, without spot or wrinkle; outside her communion are no saints, and she is never without saints. Being holy, she cannot teach anything but the truth. The Church is catholic; that is, universal or spread over the whole world, and continuing in existence until the end of time. Finally, the Church is apostolic; that is, she originated from Jesus Christ Himself; she did not suddenly begin to exist in the course of time, as the so-called Reformers of the sixteenth century pretended. To be the true Church of Christ, she must, without any missing links, ascend to the apostles and through

the apostles to Jesus Christ Himself. These are the four distinctive marks of that divine institution which is called the Catholic Church.

“I confess one baptism for the remission of sins.”—The Church makes us believe and profess that there is but one baptism, as there is but one God and one faith. Baptism makes us children of God; it infuses into us sanctifying grace, whereby the Holy Ghost comes to abide in us. Should man afterwards have the misfortune of losing that grace, it may be restored to him by absolution, which reconciles him with God.

“And I look for the resurrection of the dead.”—The Church does not say: “I believe the resurrection of the dead,” but “I expect, *I look for.*” A Christian should look with eagerness for the day of resurrection, because the reunion of body and soul is required for our perfect happiness. It would be hard for a heathen to take this view, but for a Christian it is a dogma of faith, which supports and cheers him in this valley of tears.

“And the life of the world to come,” that is, I expect a life which no longer shall be subject to death. On earth we live by the life of grace, supported by faith, hope, and charity, but we do

not see God. In the heavenly glory we will enjoy Him and see Him face to face. Moreover, during our earthly pilgrimage we are exposed to the danger of losing grace; in heaven there is no such fear; there we shall possess whatever may fully satisfy all our desires, because we shall possess God Himself. We have therefore every reason to say with the Church: "I look for the life of the world to come." When pronouncing these words the priest makes the sign of the cross, to put us in mind that it is impossible for us to enter that life but by the way of the cross.

As a sign of acceptance on our part of all that has been proposed to us in the Creed, we add, "Amen."



## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE OFFERTORY.

AFTER reading the Creed, the priest kisses the altar, and turning towards the people says: "The Lord be with you," to which the usual response is given: "And with thy spirit." The priest kisses the altar to extend to the faithful the kiss of Christ, who is represented by the altar. By the wish which he directs to the people seems to be meant in a particular manner the love and harmony among themselves in Christ. Since here commences the offering proper, the faithful are reminded that in order to be partakers of the salutary effects of this offering they should leave their offering and be first reconciled with their brother, in case he has anything against them (Matt. v. 23). The priest then admonishes the faithful to renew their attention, that their prayers united to his may from the altar ascend to the throne of the Almighty. "Let us pray." Upon that follows an antiphon, called

*Offertorium*, which, like the Introit and Post-Communion, has reference to the feast of the day. To understand this we must return to the first ages of Christianity. From the time of the apostles the faithful, who received holy communion during Mass, or simply assisted at it, brought their gifts. For the rich, this was a duty of honor; the poor were not required to give, they were supported by the Church. The best wine and the finest bread were selected for the sacrifice and placed upon the altar. The Christians, however, in addition to that offered whatever might be necessary for the service of the Church: the first fruits of the field, oil, incense, flowers, wax, etc. What the Church did not need was distributed to the poor or contributed to the support of her ministers. The only vestige left of this ancient custom is found in a solemn funeral, and in the consecration of a bishop or the benediction of an abbot. That custom of the first Christians is an unanswerable refutation of an error common nowadays with a number of hypocrites. According to them the churches are too rich, and should be reduced to the true apostolic poverty. Acting upon this principle, praiseworthy would those governments be which contribute to

that purpose by confiscating Church property and directly or indirectly endeavoring to cripple the Church in temporal matters. We could reply to those zealous hypocrites that it is unnecessary to return to the first ages of Christianity to find apostolic poverty; we meet it in many a monastery, in many a church, in many a pastoral residence; it is unnecessary to go in search of it to mission countries. They would have us believe that the apostles and the priests lived on the heavenly dew. Did those magnificent churches and chapels arise by themselves? Did Heaven directly provide them with vestments and decorations for the altar? Whence came the rich possessions of some churches, as, for instance, of the Church at Antioch? How could the priests provide for the wants of the poor? The liberal generosity of the first Christians is the best reply. The apostles and priests were poor for themselves, but they disposed of the property of the whole community. Would to God that the fault-finders of to-day followed the example of the early Christians!

Let us return now to the ceremonies of the Offertory. Formerly the antiphon and verses from the Psalms were sung alternately, as long

as the offering lasted; since the offering of private gifts was discontinued, the antiphon only has been retained, and is called *Offertorium*. After the priest has read the Offertory, the deacon presents him the paten with the Host placed thereon. The deacon has no power to consecrate, but he is allowed to touch the sacred species and distribute holy communion to the faithful. Before proceeding further, we must in a few words answer a very important question, viz., why Our Lord has chosen bread and wine for the material elements of the unbloody sacrifice of the New Law. Our Lord was of course free to select other elements; there are, however, reasons which make this choice intelligible to our weak understanding. In the first place, the prophecies and figures of the Old Law had to be fulfilled in the New. Melchisedech had offered bread and wine; Christ, as David foretold, was to be a priest according to the order of Melchisedech (Ps. cix. 4). This prophecy would not have been fulfilled had Christ not deigned to offer Himself under these visible elements. Secondly, Our Lord selected bread and wine on account of the relation which these bear to human life, thereby clearly to express the

effects of the sacrament in our soul. Bread and wine are the noblest products of nature and of human industry; they are at the same time the simplest and best food. David, greatest of many great poets, who in the sublimest terms chanted the gifts of God, expresses in a few words their excellence. "Thou waterest the hills from Thy upper rooms: . . . that Thou mayest bring bread out of the earth, and that wine may cheer the heart of man. . . . And that bread may strengthen man's heart" (Ps. ciii. 13-15). Thirdly, bread and wine are striking figures of the union of the faithful with Christ and of the faithful among themselves. Many grains of wheat make one loaf of bread, many grapes one drink, many faithful one moral body, of which Christ is the Head; He is the heavenly Vine, without whose influence the branches would wither and die. "For we, being many, are one bread, one body, all that partake of one bread" (1 Cor. x. 17). By these words St. Paul intimates that the Holy Eucharist is a communion with the body of the Lord; the use of it unites us to a moral body, and should effect that we, like the first Christians, be but one heart and one soul. The sacrificial elements are meant to

place before the eyes of our mind that twofold union.

We will now consider a few ordinances of the Church regarding these elements. First, the priests of the Latin Church are in conscience obliged to use unleavened bread for the sacrifice. For the priests of the Greek Church leavened bread is prescribed, not without historical and mystic reasons. Not to extend the limits we have proposed to ourselves in this book, we deem it sufficient merely to assert the custom of the Greek Church. To justify the practice of the Latin Church, the example of our divine Master should be sufficient. There is nothing that could make us believe that Our Saviour, when eating the Pasch with His disciples, should not have observed the prescriptions of the law. This feast was instituted in memory of the miraculous delivery of the Jews from the land of Egypt, and of the preservation of their first-born when the angel exterminated all the first-born of the Egyptians. This feast began on the evening of the fourteenth day of the month Abib, afterwards called Nisan, the first month of the holy year, which corresponded partly to the months of March and April. On the evening of



that day all leavened things had to be removed from the houses; that is why it was called the feast of the unleavened breads. As Holy Scripture expressly says that Our Saviour celebrated the Pasch with His disciples the first day of the unleavened breads, that is, on the fifteenth of Abib, when no leavened bread was allowed in the houses, we may rightfully infer that the ordinance of the Church in regard to the bread for the sacrifice is grounded on the example of Our Lord Himself. Furthermore, unleavened bread is a striking figure of the Eucharistic Lamb, Jesus Christ; of that spiritual food of our souls in holy communion; and also of that purity of heart which is demanded of priest and faithful at Mass. Leaven is the figure of the unclean and the corrupt; for, to use the words of St. Paul, it corrupteth the whole lump with which it is mixed. Jesus is purity itself; the food which He prepares for us is the bread of angels. The Apostle therefore says: "Purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new paste, as you are unleavened. For Christ our Pasch is sacrificed. Therefore let us feast: not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness: but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and



truth" (1 Cor. v. 7, 8). The form of the host is meant to convey the same idea. It is soft, thin, and light, to represent the meek and glorified Jesus, who conceals Himself under the appearance of bread. The host is round, and in that form reminds us of Him to whom the earth belongs, and who is without beginning or end. The host is white, since it is destined for the cleanest oblation. Very often a cross, a lamb, the name of the Saviour, or His figure is impressed on the host, to represent Him who after the Consecration will be really present under its appearance. The wine should be pure, that is, from the grape; the color does not affect its validity. Be this sufficient in as far as the sacrificial elements are concerned.

After having read the Offertory, the priest takes in his hands the paten with the host thereon and says the following prayer: "Receive, O Holy Father, omnipotent, eternal God, this unspotted host, which I, Thy unworthy servant, offer Thee, my living and true God, for my numberless sins, offences, and negligences, and for all present, and for all faithful Christians, living and dead, that to me and to them it may be salutary unto everlasting life. Amen." To form a true

meaning of this and the following prayers, we must bear in mind the sacrifice, although it be not yet offered. In this prayer, for instance, the host is spoken of as offered to the heavenly Father, although this host is not yet the divine Host. This host is unspotted; this is an allusion to the sacrifices of the Ancient Law, which had to be unspotted, because they were figures of Him who is purity itself. In this prayer the thoughts of the priest are directed to the Host which after consecration will be present on the altar.

In this prayer important questions are answered. To whom is the sacrifice offered? To the Father, as Christ Himself taught and offered it to the holy, almighty, eternal, living, and true God. What is offered? Benedict XIV. replies to that with these few words: "Receive, O holy, almighty, eternal God, this unspotted Lamb, into whom this bread is soon to be changed." Both the body of Christ and the bread, which it still really is, are meant here by "unspotted host." Who offers the sacrifice? "I, Thy unworthy servant," answers the priest, because it is the priest through whose ministry Christ offers Himself on the altar. For whom does the priest

offer? According to the natural order of charity, he offers it first for himself, for his innumerable sins, offences, and negligences. St. Paul says of the High-Priest Jesus Christ: "Who needeth not daily, as the other priests, to offer sacrifices first for his own sins, and then for the people's" (Heb. vii. 27). The priest knows that, although his soul may not be stained with a mortal sin, he is not holy, undefiled, nor separated from sinners. The priest offers the sacrifice, in the second place, for all present, and this should be an inducement for the faithful to be present at Mass whenever it is possible. Finally; the priest offers the sacrifice for all faithful Christians, whether living or dead, for all who belong to the communion of saints, for all the members of the Church. For what end is the sacrifice offered? That it may be salutary unto everlasting life; in other words, that to all, for time and eternity, the salutary blessings of the Redemption may be applied. We offer the holy sacrifice that in all our corporal and spiritual necessities we may obtain help and assistance, consolation in affliction, patience in suffering and trials, success in temporal interests, remission of venial sins and punishments due, deliverance of the souls in

purgatory, progress in virtue, etc., for all that may be serviceable to us or to others. All these truths are expressed in the Offertory prayer.

After that the priest makes with the paten the sign of the cross over the corporal. By this sign is meant that the sacrifice of the altar is substantially the same as the sacrifice of the cross. The deacon then pours wine into the chalice, the subdeacon a few drops of water, which the priest first blesses, saying in the mean time: "O God, ✠ who hast wonderfully framed man's exalted nature, and still more wonderfully restored it, grant us, by the mystic signification of this commingling of water and wine, to become partakers of His Godhead who was pleased to become partaker of our manhood, Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, forever and ever. Amen." This prayer dates back to the very first ages of Christianity, and gives us to understand that a very important mystery is signified by the mixing of water and wine in the chalice.

Why do we pour water into the chalice? Because, according to tradition, Our Lord set us the example when instituting the Blessed Sacrament. It was customary then, as it is still to-day in many

countries. The Church has retained the custom to unfold to our understanding these sublime mysteries. The Church says: "O God, who hast wonderfully framed man's exalted nature." Why does the Church allude to the dignity of man? Why does she remind us of the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ? Because wine and water are figures: the wine represents the divinity of Christ, the water His sacred humanity. We also are represented by the water, because through Mary we have made Jesus Christ partaker of our humanity. Therefore the Church expresses here her sentiments of admiration over the dignity of man. If we recall to our minds that God created man, we shall not be surprised to hear the Church say that He created him wonderfully. Before creating man, God said: "Let us create man according to Our image and likeness," and it was done as He said. But if the creation was wonderful, the restoration or the redemption of man was still more wonderful. The mixing of water and wine reminds us, first, of the humanity and divinity of Christ; the Church prays to God that in virtue of the precious promises which have been fulfilled in Him (2 Pet. i. 4) we may be made partakers





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AT THE OFFERING OF THE CHALICE.





of His divinity. This elevation of human nature, begun on earth by sanctifying grace, will be perfected in heavenly glory. In the earthly paradise the devil persuaded Eve that, if with Adam she would follow his advice, both would be as gods. Deception! Then, as now, nothing can elevate man to God but the faithful observance of the divine commandments. In heaven we shall be as gods, not by nature, but by the beatific vision. The Church puts this thought in our minds when speaking in this prayer of the Incarnation of the Word, who is the Source of the true greatness of man.

In Requiem Masses the priest does not bless the water, to express another great mystery. The mixing of wine and water in the chalice represents two mysteries, the union of the divine and the human nature in Jesus Christ, and also the union of Our Lord with His Church, composed of all the faithful. The Church has no longer jurisdiction over the souls in purgatory; she cannot apply to them the power of the keys. As long as those souls were united to their bodies, the Church made use towards them of the power to retain and to loose, which Christ entrusted to her. After

the parting of body and soul, the Church introduces the soul either into heaven, and then she honors it, or into purgatory, and then she prays for it. By not blessing the water in Masses for the dead, the Church shows that she has no more authority over the souls in purgatory. The water is so necessary for the sacrifice that, should it be wanting, the Mass could not be offered even on the greatest feast of the year, although it is not necessary for the validity of the sacrifice. The priest then offers this chalice to God, saying: "We offer Thee, O Lord, the chalice of salvation, beseeching Thy clemency, that in the sight of Thy divine majesty it may ascend with the odor of sweetness for our salvation and that of the whole world. Amen." While the priest says this prayer he raises the chalice and fixes his eyes on the crucifix. In this prayer there is no question of sins and offences, which force him to speak to God with downcast eyes. In this, as in the first prayer, the Church carries our thoughts to the moment of consecration. As yet the chalice contains only wine; a few moments later nothing will be left of the wine but the appearance and the accidents; the substance will disappear to make room

for the blood of Jesus Christ. The Church prays that God may favorably look down upon what the chalice will contain, and that it may be acceptable to Him for the salvation of all.

After the prayer of offering the priest, putting his hands together and bowing down a little, says the following prayer: "In a spirit of humility and with a contrite heart, may we be received by Thee, O Lord, and let our sacrifice be so made in Thy sight this day, that it may be pleasing to Thee, O Lord God." The Church has borrowed this prayer from the three young men whom Nabuchodonosor ordered to be shut up in a fiery furnace, because they would not bow the knee before his false gods. It beautifully illustrates what sentiments should animate the faithful when assisting at Mass, and the disposition of their whole life, which should be an uninterrupted offering. The priest then raises his hands and eyes towards heaven, joins his hands again, and blesses the offerings, saying at the same time: "Come, O Sanctifier, almighty, eternal God: and bless this sacrifice prepared to Thy name." This prayer contains the earnest desire that the fire of the Holy Ghost may come down, consume the bread and the wine, and

change them into the body and blood of Christ. It is the Holy Ghost who operates the change of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, as He operated the mystery of the Incarnation in the womb of the Virgin Mary. St. John Damascene beautifully expresses it in the following words: “‘How shall this be done,’ asks the Blessed Virgin, ‘because I know not man?’ And the angel answering said to her: ‘The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee.’ If you ask me how this bread becomes the body of Christ, and this wine His blood, I answer likewise: The Holy Ghost comes upon it and produces an effect which surpasses our understanding.”

## CHAPTER XIV.

### INCENSING AND WASHING OF HANDS.

MORE than once we have had occasion to remark that the altar represents Our Lord, and that is the reason why so much honor is given to it. The faithful around it are the members of Christ's mystic body. At the very beginning of Mass, after the priest ascends the altar, he incenses it on all sides as a sign of respectful homage to God. Like the kings from the East placing at the feet of the new-born Saviour the gifts which the Gospel mentions, so will the priest once more incense the altar in honor of his Master and King. The incensation after the Offertory is the principal and most solemn one. The first time the priest simply blessed the incense by saying: "Mayst thou be blessed by Him in whose honor thou wilt be cremated." This time he solemnly invokes the help of all the elect; he says: "By the intercession of blessed Michael the Archangel, standing at the right hand

of the altar of incense, and of all His elect, may the Lord deign to bless this incense and receive it as an odor of sweetness. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen." In the Apocalypse the angel holding the golden censer is not named. The Church here names St. Michael, the prince of the heavenly host, the protector of all faithful souls, who introduces them into the land of eternal light, the conqueror of Satan and his adherents.

We have before explained the mystic signification of the incense. The priest first incenses the bread and the wine by making three crosses over them with the censer to express the mystic relation between the sacrifice and the Most Holy Trinity. The first cross reminds us of the Father, to whom the sacrifice is offered; the second of the Son, who is sacrificed on the altar; the third of the Holy Ghost, by whose power the change is made. The priest further incenses the offerings from the right side to the left, and from the left to the right, to signify that these elements are now separated from everything unholy and are set aside exclusively for the sacrifice; that is the reason why the Church orders that the bread and wine should be treated with more respect after the Offertory than be-

fore. While incensing the bread and the wine, the priest says the following prayer: "May this incense, blessed by Thee, O Lord, ascend to Thee and Thy mercy come down upon us." This prayer is at the same time an homage to God and a supplication for ourselves. The priest then proceeds to incense the altar, in the same way as he did before, with this difference only, that on the first occasion he incensed the altar in silence, while this time the Church directs him to say part of Psalm cxl., chosen chiefly on account of the first words: "Let my prayer be directed, O Lord, as incense in Thy sight, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and a door round about my lips. Incline not my heart to evil words, to make excuses in sins." The evening sacrifice, which is spoken of in this prayer, may be beautifully applied to the unbloody sacrifice of the altar, which was instituted in the evening; the sacrifice of the cross also was an evening sacrifice, as it was consummated towards evening. We pray therefore that in union with these offerings of infinite value our prayer may ascend to God's throne as a sweet odor. Handing the censer to the deacon,



the priest expresses for the deacon and himself the following wish: "May the Lord enkindle in us the fire of His love and the flame of everlasting charity." Twice before when incense was used, before the Introit and after the Gospel, the priest alone was incensed; this time all the assistants, the choir, and the faithful also are incensed, to signify that they are all but one mystic body, of which Jesus Christ is the Head.

After the incensation, the priest washes his hands. When we take into consideration the practice of the early Church, and also that by incensing the hands may be soiled, we shall readily understand that the priest must wash his hands before touching the sacred body of his God. But this washing of the hands is rather symbolic of the greater purity which is demanded of the priest as the solemn moment of consecration approaches. As the Saviour washed the feet of His apostles before instituting the Holy Eucharist and giving them holy communion, so also must the priest purify himself. During Mass the priest washes only the tips of his fingers, not the whole hand. Thereby we are given to understand that we should cleanse ourselves before Mass of our more grievous sins, that dur-

ing Mass we may at most have to purify ourselves of smaller imperfections. By the washing of the hands the priest expresses in particular his desire of being more and more cleansed of the little faults which he may have committed from the beginning of Mass. This washing of the hands, says St. Thomas, is sufficient to signify a perfect purification, because, the hand being the member of members, all works are ascribed to the hands. The verses from the Psalms which the priest recites express still clearer the mystic signification of the washing of the hands. The Church has selected for it part of Psalm xxv.: "I will wash my hands among the innocent: and will compass Thine altar, O Lord. That I may hear the voice of praise, and tell of all Thy wondrous works. I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of Thy house: and the place where Thy glory dwelleth. Take not away my soul, O God, with the wicked, nor my life with bloody men. In whose hands are iniquities: their right hand is filled with gifts. But as for me, I have walked in my innocence: redeem me and have mercy on me. My foot hath stood in the right way: in the churches I will bless Thee, O Lord." All these words ap-

ply to the occasion. "I will wash my hands among the innocent." How clean and pure must not the hands of the priest be! Those hands which have been anointed with holy oil for the service of God! Those hands, which, like the hands of Moses, are extended heavenward to present to God the needs of humanity! Those hands, which touch the immaculate Lamb, offer Him to God, and give Him in holy communion to the faithful! But how can the priest in truth speak so? He lives in the world, where this brightness of the soul's purity is so easily tarnished. He is not impeccable, but he is in earnest about combating his passions, about purifying his soul more and more, to approach the altar with clean hands.

In the words which immediately follow, David probably alludes to a religious ceremony as then practised. They remind us also of the host of ministering priests and levites in the Temple of Solomon. The priest at the altar is surrounded by numerous angels, extolling with him the wondrous works of God. David further testifies that he found his delight in the service of God, and dwelt with pleasure in His sanctuary. This sanctuary was not the Temple of Jerusalem, which did not exist at that

time, but was erected some years after by Solomon. This sanctuary was the Tabernacle, containing the Ark of the Covenant, which in Holy Scripture is called the glory of the Lord. Such should be the disposition of the priest. He must cherish his sanctuary, be it a magnificent basilica or a little frame church. There is his Golgotha and his Thabor. There he must find his delight and its beauty he must love.

In the following verses the priest prays that God might preserve in him this favorable disposition and keep from him the terrible punishments reserved for the wicked. For this eminent favor the priest promises to praise God in the gatherings of His militant children on earth and of His glorified children in heaven. The sentiments expressed in this psalm correspond with those expressed in the psalm which the priest recited at the beginning of Mass before ascending the altar. When the psalm *Judica* is not said, the small doxology, *Gloria Patri*, is also omitted. We must further remark that the priest washes his hands on the epistle side, because generally—especially during the Middle Ages—the sacarium was on that side. This served to receive all blessed or consecrated

things which could not be used, to preserve them from desecration, and also for the washing of hands during Mass.

After the washing of the hands, the priest returns to the middle of the altar, where, joining his hands and resting them on the altar, he prays: "Receive, O Holy Trinity, this oblation, which we offer Thee in remembrance of the Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ; and in honor of the blessed Mary ever virgin, blessed John the Baptist, and of the holy apostles Peter and Paul, of these and all Thy saints, that it may be to their honor and to our salvation, and that in heaven they may deign to pray for us whose memory we celebrate on earth. Through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen." Many important truths are contained in this prayer. In the first two Offertory prayers the priest addressed the Father; in this he addresses expressly the Three Divine Persons, and prays them to receive this offering. He means thereby the bread and the wine which he has just offered; but it is not altogether the bread and the wine which he has in view. These objects are truly sanctified and blessed, and should, as such, be handled with respect; but the offering

which is presented to the Divine Majesty cannot be limited to a mere material sacrifice, such as the Jews formerly offered. The priest has here also in view the offering of the great sacrifice which will be consummated a few moments later. This offering is presented to the Blessed Trinity in remembrance of the Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ, three great and necessary events. He suffered and died, but this was not sufficient. Death, a consequence of sin, is like the victory of Satan over man; death would have been a defeat to the God-Man, had He died never to rise again. Not only did He rise from the dead, but He ascended gloriously into heaven. The Saviour was not to remain on earth; as long as He did not open heaven to introduce His sacred humanity, so long would it remain closed to man. Let us therefore not forget that the Lord suffered and rose from the dead, but that our salvation would not be perfect had He remained in banishment on earth; to the Passion and the Resurrection we must then necessarily add the Ascension. The Church is so well convinced that these three events are necessary to give us a correct idea of the Saviour and His work that



she requires here an open profession of these truths.

A question here presents itself: How can the sacrifice, which belongs to God alone, be offered in honor of the saints? The sacrifice must be offered to God only; but this does not prevent that it also tend to the honor of the saints. To form a right idea of this, we must remember that the saints with Christ are but one mystic body. When Christ offers Himself to His heavenly Father during Mass, the saints offer themselves with Him. This union with Christ is honorable to the saints, and this is the reason why the sacrifice, which regards directly the glory of God, also indirectly tends to honor the saints. This being so, the greater share of that honor belongs to the Blessed Virgin. For she it was who gave to the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity the body and the blood which is daily reproduced on thousands of our altars. She it was who stood fearlessly at the foot of the cross to offer with her Son the bloody sacrifice to the eternal Father. The Blessed Virgin, although a creature, surpasses in a sense the whole creation; she is the masterpiece of God's omnipotence. Justly therefore does the Church



honor, even during Mass, the exalted woman who is the Mother of God. The Church also holds St. John the Baptist in particular veneration; she mentions his name in the Confiteor, and again delights in paying here her homage to the precursor of Our Lord. The Church mentions also the names of the two great apostles who worked so zealously together at the foundation of the Holy Roman Church. Next in the prayer under consideration occur the following words: "Of these and of all the saints." The question has often been asked: Who are meant by *these* saints? Some think they are the saints whose feast is celebrated that day; but in that case the singular should often be used instead of the plural. The Masses for the dead would then also offer a difficulty; in those Masses which are not offered in honor of any particular saint, the word should then be omitted, which the Church does not allow in any case. According to others, by *these* are understood the saints whose names have been mentioned in this prayer. The Church means, it seems to us, the saints whose relics are inclosed in the altar-stone; that is the reason why at the consecration of an altar the relics of more than one saint have to be inclosed

in it. Finally, the Church mentions all the saints in general, because they all participate in the Mass. The last part of this prayer clearly indicates that the holy sacrifice of Mass, on the one hand, honors God, the Blessed Virgin, and the saints, and, on the other, benefits us. But how can the Mass tend to honor the saints, since they do not need our prayers, have all they desire, are perfectly happy, and cannot rise higher in the heavenly glory by our homages? Pope Innocent III. replies "that the words *illis proficiat ad honorem* [that it may be to them an honor] should be so understood as expressing the desire that the saints may be more and more honored by the faithful on earth; even a great many do not think it improbable that the *accidental* glory of the saints may increase until the general judgment day, and that the Church may desire an increase of the honor paid to them." The prayer ends with the fervent request that those whose memory we honor upon earth may be in heaven our intercessors in union with Our Lord Jesus Christ.



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AT THE ORATE FRATRES,



## CHAPTER XV.

### THE ORATE FRATRES, THE SECRETS, AND THE PREFACE.

WE have frequently noticed the intimate relation between the priest and the faithful present during holy Mass. The many salutations and calls of the people to prayer on the part of the priest, the participation in the prayer of the priest on the part of the faithful by the mouth of the acolytes, are clear proofs of it. Priest and faithful help each other. The priest, having ended the prayer, "Receive, O Holy Trinity," kisses the altar, turns to the people with downcast eyes, extends his hands, and joins them again, saying meanwhile in a low voice, "Pray, brethren," and turning to the altar he continues in silence: "That my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the Father Almighty." This is, as it were, the priest's farewell greeting to the faithful; he will not turn to them again till after the sacrifice has been offered. He does not

use here the common salutation, which he has so often addressed to the people; he does not content himself with the ordinary "The Lord be with you;" he recommends himself to the people in order that this sacrifice, which is his and theirs at the same time, may be acceptable to God. As the solemn moment of consecration approaches, he feels all the more the necessity of being supported by the prayers of the faithful. The priest addresses them here as brethren, a truly Christian expression indeed, for we are all brethren in Christ. Very often, as Scripture testifies, did the apostles address the first Christians by that name. All those who have quit the world, all those who are living now or will live in the future, provided they believe in Jesus Christ, and have been adopted by Him through Baptism, are indeed brethren to one another. They have been regenerated in Christ by the same sacrament, reared in the communion of the same holy Church, called to the same heritage by the same merciful Father. Such Christians should be at all times, but especially during the holy sacrifice, one in heart and one in soul, praying for and with one another.

The reason of the priest's inviting the congre-

gation to pray accompanies the invitation, namely, that his and their sacrifice may be acceptable to God the Father Almighty. The offering of the holy Mass is the sublimest act of priestly power. In the pulpit the priest acts as teacher, in the confessional as judge and doctor, but at the altar he is properly a priest. "No sacrifice without a priest, no priest without a sacrifice, and without sacrifice no religion!" (St. Thomas.) Therefore the sacrifice of holy Mass is chiefly the offering of the priest, but it is also the offering of the faithful, because the priest offers it in their name and in union with them, and because at the communion they receive the Lord's body and blood, which is sacrificed for them. Holy Mass is then also the offering of the faithful; this consideration induces the priest to invite them to greater attention. They should not forget that they have their share in the priesthood. St. Peter calls them a kingly priesthood (1 Pet. ii. 9) because they are Christians. They come from Christ and belong to Him, they are anointed and by Baptism become other Christs; they must therefore be able to sacrifice with the priest. The united prayer of the priest and the faithful must cause the offering to be acceptable to God,



not as regards the offering, which in itself is acceptable to God, but on the part of the offerers, that is, of the priest and the faithful, who by want of due disposition might excite God's wrath against them. Animated by the voice of the priest, the faithful hasten to correspond to his desire in the following words: "May the Lord receive the sacrifice from thy hands for the praise and glory of His name, for our benefit and that also of His entire holy Church." The priest then joins in the sentiments expressed, answering silently, "Amen." Although the faithful sacrifice with the priest, yet they pray that God may receive the sacrifice from *his* hands, to show that the priest is the proper minister by whom the sacrifice is offered; his hands only have been anointed and consecrated for that purpose. He is the mediator between God and men, he presents the prayers and wishes of the faithful to God, and very often God's graces and favors come to them through him. Priest and faithful pray to God, first, that the offering may tend to the honor of God, for which purpose it was principally instituted, and secondly, because it is also a propitiatory and impetratory sacrifice for the benefit of those present and of all Christians.

After the priest has responded "Amen" to the wishes of the faithful, he reads the *Secrets*, which are not preceded by the "*Oremus*" ("Let us pray"), as are the Collects, because the *Orate Fratres* is an exhortation to prayer. This prayer is called secret or silent prayer, because it is said in a low voice which cannot be heard by the congregation. In number and form the *Secrets* correspond to the Collects; but they differ in other respects. The Collects have a nearer reference to the feast which is celebrated that day, and ask for a particular grace, a particular virtue, in which the saint excelled. The *Secrets*, on the contrary, are chiefly what many holy Fathers call them, "a prayer over the gifts offered;" although they belong to the changeable parts of Mass, and also, like the Collects, refer partly to the feast of the day. In the *Secrets*, as in many other prayers, we address to God a twofold prayer. In them we ask God, first, that He may graciously receive the offered gifts, bless and sanctify them; secondly. that in virtue of the offering which we present to Him He may shower down upon us His manifold graces. In this silent prayer the priest follows the example of the Divine Offerer,

who during His life often sought solitude to converse with His heavenly Father, especially on the night of His Passion in the Garden of Gethsemani, when leaving His apostles He withdrew to pray silently, before delivering Himself into the hands of His enemies and consummating the bloody sacrifice of the cross. The faithful should unite with the priest, who prays silently for them. The music during the Secrets should be such as not to distract the faithful, but rather to help their attention and devotion. The faithful cannot do better than to make the words of the priest their own, even when they do not understand them. So did the first Christians, when there were no books wherein they could read the prayers of Mass. They contented themselves by saying "Amen" to the prayers of the priest. This little word contains a simple but sublime act of faith. It means on the lips of the faithful: "We know not what is best for us, God knows; we know not how to glorify God best, the Church knows. The Church has prayed, because the priest prays in her name. The prayers of the priest are the prayers of the Church, they are also our prayers, whatever they may contain; we cannot desire anything better than

what the Church desires, we can say nothing better than what the Church says; therefore, Amen—So be it.” After the priest has prayed for some time in holy silence, he concludes the Secrets, as he does the Collects, with the supplication that the favors requested may be granted through the merits of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with the Father in the unity of the Holy Ghost forever and ever. By these last words the priest interrupts his silence. The people through the acolytes answer “Amen.”

The priest then in joyful tones begins the *Preface*, which is an introduction or nearer preparation to the Canon or principal part of the Mass. As the preface of a book serves to give an idea of the matter the book treats, or the exordium of an oration serves to gain the good-will of the audience and to draw their attention, so does the Preface, if we may compare it to the introduction of a book or of an oration, introduce us to the Canon and serve to predispose God towards us. The priest begins by thanking and praising God, that he may more worthily proceed to consecrate the body and blood of Christ. In this solemn thanksgiving he follows the example of the Saviour, who, before changing bread

and wine into His own body and blood, raised His eyes heavenward and thanked His heavenly Father. With the Preface begins this solemn thanksgiving, of which the Consecration is the crown and the conclusion. The Preface is preceded by a touching colloquy between the priest and the faithful, which seems to be as old as the Church itself, and must probably be ascribed to the apostles; it is found in the oldest missals. The Preface is composed of three parts. The first consists of three verses and three responses: to wit:

V. "The Lord be with you." R. "And with thy spirit."

V. "Lift up your hearts." R. "We lift them up to God."

V. "Let us give thanks unto the Lord our God." R. "It is meet and just."

This part is the same in all Prefaces. The greeting which the priest has often before addressed to the faithful serves also as an introduction to the Preface, and very justly. For, as the solemn moment of consecration approaches, priest and faithful feel more sincerely the need of divine assistance. Grace alone can cause man to be so detached from all things earthly that

all his attention will be fixed on God and things divine. This applies to the faithful as well as to the priest; therefore they interchange with each other the same wish. John the deacon relates in the life of St. Gregory the Great that when on one occasion this great saint repeated those words, "The Lord be with you," during Mass, and the servants inadvertently did not reply, an angel filled their place and answered: "And with thy spirit." This time, however, the priest does not turn to the faithful to greet them. He has now, like Moses on Mount Sinai, entered the holy cloud; he now proceeds to communicate intimately with his God; in future he will have his eyes fixed on the altar, and not turn again to the people till after the sacrifice has been consummated.

Then follows the admonition of the priest to lift their hearts to God, and the assurance of the faithful that they have done what he asks. While the priest says, "Lift up your hearts," he raises his hands to express his longing after things heavenly and eternal. The Church follows in this ceremony the invitation of the prophet Jeremias (Lam. iii. 41): "Let us lift up our hearts with our hands to the Lord in the heavens." Let us lift up our hearts to



the Lord, not like the proud, who lift them against God. Very significant are these few words. They tell us that, free from all things earthly, free from all attachment which is not of God, we should lift ourselves to God with all the faculties of our soul. The faithful reply to the invitation: "We lift them up to God." God grant that this reply be not a lie! What can it benefit us to give the priest that assurance if our works indicate the contrary? St. John Chrysostom addresses such in great earnest: "What dost thou, O man? What didst thou answer to the priest, when he said: Lift up your hearts to God? Art thou not ashamed, that at this moment thou makest thyself a liar? The divine feast is prepared; the Lamb is being offered for thee . . . and thou art not ashamed to become a liar this very moment." In the hope, however, that those present mean what they say, he invites them to join with him in the sublime thanksgiving which he tenders in the name of all to the heavenly Father. "Let us give thanks to the Lord our God," says the priest, while he slowly joins his hands and reverently bows his head. The faithful answer: "It is meet and just." On this colloquy follows the second part



of the Preface. This part is subject to certain changes. On a few feast-days the Church delights in thanking God for the extraordinary blessings which these feasts commemorate; or which He has granted by the mediation of the Blessed Virgin or the holy apostles, or of another saint. The common Preface is as follows: "It is truly meet and just, right and salutary, that we should always and in all places, give thanks to Thee, O holy Lord, almighty Father, eternal God, through Christ our Lord; by whom the angels praise Thy majesty, the dominations adore it, the powers tremble before it, the heavens and the virtues of heaven and the blessed seraphs also with united exultation praise it. We pray Thee let our voices ascend with theirs to Thee, while with the deepest awe we confess and cry."

The priest begins by adducing four motives why we should thank God.

First, to thank God is *meet* in reference to God and to ourselves. By thanksgiving we profess and glorify the infinite worth of God, and raise at the same time the dignity of man. By thanking God we profess that He is the Giver of all good gifts, that He loves us with paternal affection; in other words, by thanking God we give

Him what His dignity requires from us. Gratitude is the distinctive mark of a noble heart; by gratitude we begin upon earth a life which in eternity will be perfected by an uninterrupted thanksgiving.

Secondly, to thank God is *just*. Gratitude has a close connection with justice. What is justice but an earnest desire and effort to compensate as much as possible for the benefits we have received? Therefore, whoever desires to be just must necessarily practise gratitude. Holy Scripture says distinctly that gratitude on our part is a serious obligation.

Thirdly, to thank God is *right*; it is becoming on our part. When we consider the great love which God has borne us, and even now bears us, we will readily understand that nothing could be more right, more becoming, and more reasonable than that our whole life, if it were possible, be one uninterrupted thanksgiving.

Finally, to thank God is *salutary*, for time and eternity, for the body as well as for the soul. Gratitude opens the treasures of divine generosity, and enriches the soul with precious graces. Learned theologians teach that gratitude is the great means by which we obtain from God the

gift of perseverance and eternal salvation. For gratitude is the beginning of heavenly life; it is the great incentive, inducing us to continue courageously our journey to heaven; it is a supplication to God, obliging Him to bestow continually new graces on us. To thank God is then meet, just, right, and salutary. Thence follows also that our gratitude is not limited to time or place; we should thank God "always and in all places;" in adversity as well as in prosperity we should always be able to say from our hearts: "Thanks be to God." Yet we owe God a special thanksgiving during Mass, which is the crown of God's love towards man. But if we wish the homage of our gratitude to rise to the throne of the "holy Lord," the "almighty Father," the "eternal God," it should be presented "through Christ our Lord," the Mediator between God and man. Jesus is not only the Head of the Church militant on earth, but also of the Church triumphant in heaven. He is the Mediator not only of men, but also of angels; therefore do the blessed spirits praise the Divine Majesty through Christ. Gratitude has to be rendered in the same way, says St. Thomas, as God's blessings come to us, viz., through Christ (in Ep. ad Rom.).

By “angels” is to be understood here not the angels in general, but the lowest choir of angels. According to the opinion of theologians, corroborated by many passages of Holy Scripture, the heavenly spirits are divided into nine choirs, of which the angels are the lowest. In the common Preface not all the choirs of angels are expressly mentioned. Besides the angels are also mentioned the dominations and the powers who tremble before the Divine Majesty. This respectful fear, however, does not imply for the blessed punishment or torture. This sublime thanksgiving is not limited to the one or the other choir of angels; nay, the heavens and the virtues of heaven, that is, all the blessed citizens and the princes of the invisible heaven, together with the highest choir of seraphim, glowing with love, vie with one another in honoring and praising the Divine Majesty. We must humbly confess that we cannot honor and praise God on earth as the blessed do in heaven. And yet the mystery at which we assist strikes with awe the highest choir of angels. It is then quite natural that we should unite with the heavenly spirits, and cry to God with all the fervor of our hearts: “Holy! holy! holy! Lord God of

hosts! Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory! Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest." The first part of this canticle is taken from a vision of Isaias (vi. 3). The prophet saw the Lord sitting on His throne, surrounded with angels, respectfully crying out to Him: "Holy, holy, holy," etc. St. John relates nearly the same in the Apocalypse (iv. 8).

The Church could find no better place for this canticle of praise than immediately before the Canon. By repeating three times the word *holy*, the angels tell us that the God whom they glorify is the God of all holiness; for He is holiness itself. Together with His holiness they glorify His power. They call Him the Lord God of hosts, which means the God of all power. How could our weak intellect form a nearer idea of God's omnipotence than from an army, which overcomes all obstacles, shrinks from no difficulties, and vanquishes all? Such is God, infinitely powerful as He is infinitely holy. The thrice-repeated *holy* refers to the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. We do not find anywhere in the Old Testament the Three Divine Persons clearly and separately

mentioned. This knowledge was reserved to a few privileged persons, to whom God, as in the case of Isaias, chose to reveal it. After this profession of God's holiness and omnipotence, the Church adds: "Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory." A sublime expression of God's glory! Every little corner of creation shows forth His glory; everything comes from His hand and glorifies Him. Ravished with joy, the Church cries out: "Hosanna in the highest!" These and the following words are taken from the Gospel of St. Matthew (xxi. 9), where the Evangelist relates the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. A very great multitude went to meet Him, and, cutting boughs from the trees and strewing them in the way, they accompanied Him through the golden gate to the Temple, repeating the same words which the priest here recites. And yet that great multitude did not know Him, for a few days later they will cry: "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him." With what sentiments then should the faithful pronounce those words, because for them Jesus is not an unknown person? A few days later Jesus goes up to Jerusalem to sacrifice Himself on the altar of the cross; He now





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AT THE SANCTUS.





comes down from heaven to renew this bloody sacrifice in an unbloody manner. To indicate that the Blessed One who comes in the name of the Lord is Jesus Christ Himself, the priest signs himself at these words with the sign of the cross.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### FIRST PRAYER OF THE CANON.

THE priest now begins the *Canon*. This Greek word means properly a straight wooden stick or rule, used by artisans and storekeepers to measure. In ecclesiastical language this word has many significations; for instance, the Canon of Holy Scripture means all the books of Holy Scripture; the definitions of general councils are also called *canones*. By the Canon or Rule of Mass we understand that unchangeable part which constitutes the essence of the Mass. It begins after the Sanctus and ends before the Pater Noster. The Council of Trent declared in regard to the origin of the Canon as follows (session xxii. c. iv.): "And whereas it beseemeth that holy things be administered in a holy manner, and of all holy things this sacrifice is the most holy; to the end that it might be worthily and reverently offered and received, the Catholic Church instituted, many years ago, the sacred

Canon, so pure from every error that nothing is contained therein which does not in the highest degree savor of a certain holiness and piety, and raise up to God the minds of those who offer. For it is composed out of the very words of the Lord, the traditions of the apostles, and the pious institutions also of holy pontiffs."

For more than twelve hundred years the Canon has remained unchanged. This is of all prayers the one that was composed by a special inspiration of the Holy Ghost; it is a prayer full of power and unction. Before explaining the first prayer of the Canon, we must show why the Canon is said silently. The Church prescribes that the Canon shall be said in such a low tone of voice that only the priest can hear himself and not be understood by the audience. This general law admits, in the Latin Church, of but one exception; namely, in the Mass of an ordination to the priesthood. The bishop then raises his voice a little for the Secrets and the Canon, not, however, so as to be understood by the people, but in order that the newly ordained priests, kneeling around the altar, may recite the prayers with him and pronounce simultaneously the words of consecration. The bishop

follows in that the example of the Saviour, who, at the Last Supper, when ordaining His apostles to the priesthood, consecrated bread and wine, and pronounced the words loud enough to be understood by the apostles, to teach them the manner of consecrating which was to last to the end of the world. "The Canon is said silently," says Benedict XIV., "because the apostles prescribed it, and because the Church out of respect wished to preserve this apostolic tradition." But there are other reasons which perfectly justify this custom.

1. This subdued recitation of the Canon is to show that the real act of offering or consecrating belongs exclusively to the priest. The priest only is empowered by God to change bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ; to immolate the divine Lamb in an unbloody manner. As Moses on the mountain conversed alone with God, so does the priest at the altar, when he proceeds, as vicegerent and minister of the eternal High-Priest, to offer the holy sacrifice for the whole Church.

2. The quiet recitation of the Canon illus-

trates beautifully the substance and the consummation of the great mystery of our altars. The material elements, namely, bread and wine, are changed into the body and blood of Christ in a manner that the senses do not perceive, and no created intelligence can understand. Each Host contains more mysteries than there are stars in the firmament. The holy stillness during Mass serves to indicate and to recall to our remembrance the unspeakable depth of the mysteries accomplished on the altar. It shows at the same time that the Church treats and adores this mystery with humble reverence and unspeakable admiration.

3. The sight of the priest conversing with God in silence is a powerful means to excite and to promote the necessary dispositions among those present. This sacred silence is something so sublime and mysterious that it excites the faithful to greater respect, enkindles in their hearts a holy fear, brings about a salutary compunction, and penetrates them with true feelings of piety.

4. Besides these reasons, which amply justify the ordinance of the Church, it seems to us that the silent recitation of the Canon also serves to

preserve from profanation and irreverence these sacred words.

5. Finally, this silent prayer is an imitation of what the divine High-Priest did the night before His passion on the Mount of Olives, and a few hours later on the cross. Jesus did not always pray aloud; often He prayed to His heavenly Father in silence. No wonder, indeed, that the minister of Christ at the renewal of the offering of the cross should imitate His divine example. As the Eternal Word was born during the silence of night in the stable of Bethlehem, so does the King of glory now descend on the altar in profound stillness.

Before we proceed to explain the first prayer of the Canon, we must say a word about the many crosses which are made over the sacrificial elements during the Canon. Before consecration, they serve to sanctify more and more the material elements; after consecration, they serve chiefly to signify that the Victim which is now on the altar is the same as the Victim of the cross, and to present it, as such, to the heavenly Father for the sins of men. St. Thomas, the prince of theologians, refers these different crosses to the various events of Jesus' passion,



which began with His betrayal by Judas and ended in His death on the cross. We translate the following from St. Thomas (3a Quæst., lxxxiii., art. v., 3): "First came the betrayal of Christ by Judas and the Jews; this is typified by the three crosses at the words, 'These gifts, these presents, these holy unspotted sacrifices.' Secondly, the delivery of Jesus to the priests, the scribes, and the Pharisees; this is typified by three other crosses at the words, 'Approved, ratified, reasonable, and acceptable,' which indicate also the price of this delivery, namely, thirty pieces of silver. Two crosses are added at the words 'body' and 'blood,' to indicate the person of the betrayer Judas and the innocent Jesus who was sold. Thirdly, the prefiguring of the passion at the Last Supper, to express which two crosses are made immediately before the consecration of the body and of the blood at the word 'blessed.' Fourthly, the passion proper of Our Lord; to typify the five wounds, five crosses are made at the words, 'A pure Victim, a holy Victim, an immaculate Victim, the holy Bread of eternal life, and the Chalice of everlasting salvation.' Fifthly, the nailing to the cross, the shedding of blood, and the

fruit of the passion are represented by three crosses at the words, 'That as many as shall by partaking at this altar receive the most sacred body and blood of Thy Son may be filled with all heavenly blessing and grace.' Sixthly, the threefold prayer on the cross is figured by three crosses at the words, 'Sanctify, quicken, bless.' Seventhly, the three hours during which Jesus hung on the cross are figured by three crosses at the words, 'Through Him, and with Him, and in Him.' Eighthly, the separation of body and soul is represented by two crosses which are made immediately after the preceding ones in front of the chalice. Ninthly, the Resurrection on the third day is represented by three crosses at the words, 'May the peace of the Lord be always with you.' St. Thomas adds the following remarkable words: "We may for brevity's sake say that the consecration of this sacrament, and the acceptableness of this offering and the fruit thereof, proceed from the power of the cross of Christ; and therefore the priest makes the sign of the cross whenever one of them is mentioned." We may now in explaining the Canon dispense from returning to this simple yet sublime application.

After the Sanctus the priest lifts up his eyes, raises his hands heavenward, joins them, and bowing profoundly, his hands resting on the altar, says the following prayer: "We therefore humbly pray and beseech Thee, most merciful Father, through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Our Lord, that Thou wouldst accept and bless these ✠ gifts, these ✠ presents, these ✠ holy unspotted sacrifices, which, in the first place, we offer Thee for Thy holy Catholic Church, which vouchsafe to pacify, guard, unite, and govern throughout the whole world, together with Thy servant, [N.], our Pope, [N.], our bishop, as also all orthodox believers and professors of the Catholic and Apostolic Faith." The first prayer of the Canon begins in Latin with the letter T, the same as the *Thau* of the Hebrews, which in its form represents the cross. No more appropriate sign could be prefixed to this prayer, during which Calvary's sacrifice is renewed. When the magnificent missals of old were written, enriched with various flowers and designs, the thought came to adorn the letter T, and to have the figure of Christ on the cross, which it forms. By degrees these designs were enlarged, and finally represented the whole scene of the cruci-

fixion; the design, however enlarged, always formed the first letter of the prayer *Te igitur*. Ultimately the object was deemed of such importance as to require a separate picture. Hence nearly all the modern missals have before the Canon a picture of the crucifixion. To conceive a clearer idea of this, we must remember that in the Old Testament this letter is particularly mentioned. Ezechiel (ch. ix.), speaking of the elect, says that all those whom God deigned to spare were to be marked upon their foreheads with the letter *Thau*. As the Israelites were saved by that sign, so were we redeemed by the cross of Christ, having the form of a T.

A piece of wood was placed over the cross, to which the inscription was attached, giving to the cross the form as we generally see it. The words of St. John, "Pilate wrote a title, and he put it upon the cross" (xix. 19), show sufficiently that it was no part of the cross proper, and consequently that the cross had the form of a T. This shows the importance of the first letter, with which the great prayer of the Canon begins.

This prayer is addressed to the heavenly

Father, whom we call most merciful Father, because He is indeed the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort (2 Cor. i. 3), always ready to listen to our feeble prayers, and more so when we pray to Him in union with the Church, through Jesus Christ, His Son, Our Lord. We pray and beseech Him with all earnestness that He may graciously receive and bless these gifts. To put more stress on his prayer, the priest kisses the altar and blesses the elements, which are called gifts, offerings, and sacrifices. These different appellations apply to the same thing, namely, to the bread and the wine, but in a different sense. Bread and wine are called gifts and offerings, inasmuch as they are material elements, which we consecrate to God; sacrifices in reference to the consecration, which will consummate the oblation.

After blessing the offerings, the priest continues with hands extended, and prays first for the Church; no prayer could be more acceptable to God. The priest prays that God may grant unity to the Church, as He wishes that she be one: "One is my dove" (Cant. vi. 8). We pray that she may remain one, that nothing may tear asunder the seamless garment of Christ. In the

Lord's Prayer Christ teaches us that the honor and glory of God must be paramount; here He is honored in the first place in the person of His bride. We ask for her true peace, that she may be guarded and rightly governed throughout the world. Each Mass therefore benefits the whole Church, all the members participate in it; therefore they also are distinctly mentioned. In the first place, the vicar of Jesus Christ upon earth. The priest, when pronouncing the name of the reigning Pontiff, bows his head to honor Jesus Christ in His vicar. Next to the Pope's name comes that of the bishop in whose diocese the Mass is offered. Finally, not to omit any one, the Church speaks of all the faithful adherents of the true faith. We must profess that faith to be included among those who are here mentioned; we must profess the Catholic faith, which comes down to us from the apostles. The Church does not pray here for those who do not profess that Catholic and apostolic faith. The faithful children of the Church have a share in all the Masses which are offered in the whole world. Were the holy sacrifice of Mass to cease, we would immediately fall back into the horrors of paganism; this will be the work of the Anti-



christ at the end of the world. He will, as Scripture foretells, do all in his power to hinder and prevent the offering of Mass; and when, with God's permission, his power shall have succeeded against the continual sacrifice, then the days of grief will come, and God will ultimately destroy the world, there being no longer a reason for its continuance. This should not astonish us, since for God it is the sublimest work. He cannot ignore the voice of that blood, speaking a thousand times better than that of Abel. We must, with regard to the Blessed Eucharist, take well into consideration these three things, viz.: the sacrifice, by which we honor God; the sacrament, by which Jesus becomes the nourishment of our souls; and the possession of the God-Man, whom for our consolation we can adore during our earthly captivity. The sublimest of all is the sacrifice; and when these three acts are united they constitute perfection, and this is what the Lord desired when instituting the Blessed Eucharist.

Formerly in the first prayer of the Canon, after mentioning the bishop, the king was named; but since the correction of the Missal by Pius V. this is omitted; differences in relig-



ion, since the so-called Reformation, among the crowned heads led to this. There are, however, a few Catholic countries where, by special permission of the Holy See, the king or emperor is named.

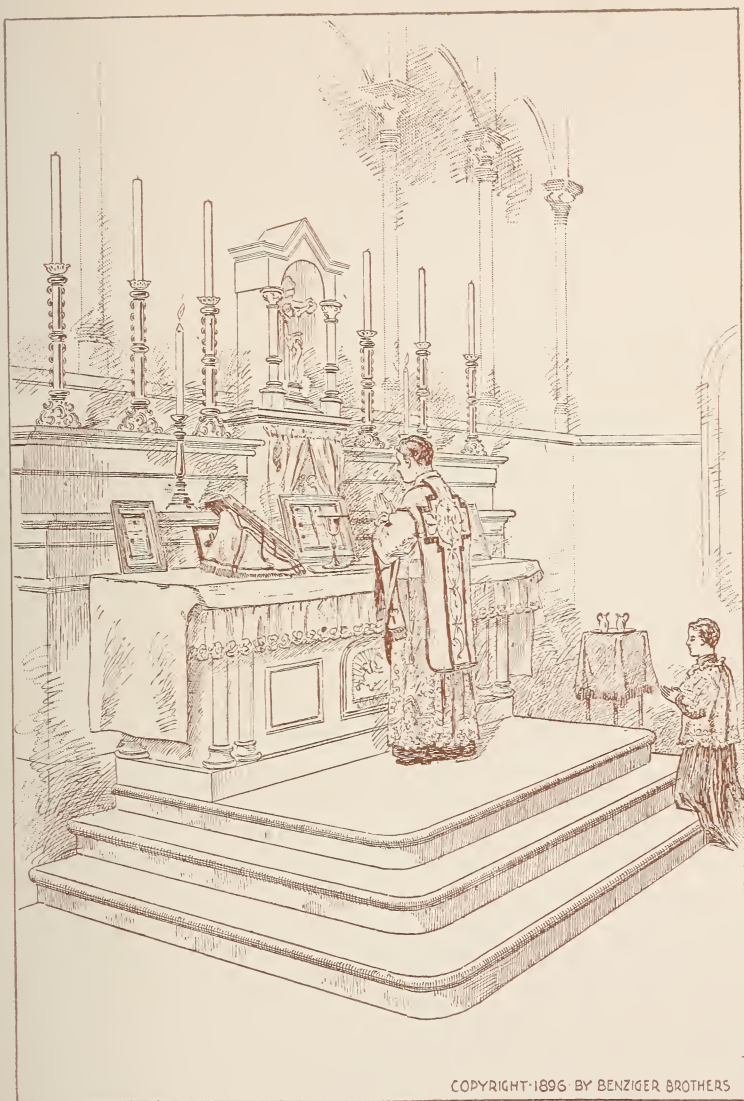
## CHAPTER XVII.

### FROM THE COMMEMORATION OF THE LIVING TO THE SECOND PRAYER.

THE following is the literal translation of the *Memento for the Living*: “Remember, O Lord, Thy servants and handmaids [N. and N.], and all here present, whose faith and devotion are known to Thee, for whom we offer or who offer up to Thee this sacrifice of praise, for themselves and all pertaining to them, for the redemption of their souls, for the hope of their salvation and well-being, and who pay their vows unto Thee, the eternal God, living and true.” This prayer was formerly called diptych prayers. Diptychs were, with the Greeks and Romans, lead, ivory, or wooden writing-tablets, the two leaves of which could be folded together, and on these the first Christians inscribed the names of bishops and other superiors, of benefactors, and of the departed. There were diptychs for the living and diptychs for the

dead. The names were read during Mass; but this reading, as far as place, time, and person were concerned, was not the same in all countries. In the Roman Church the names of the living were read at the beginning of the Canon; the names of the dead after the Consecration. Gradually, however the list of the names inscribed became so long that, in order not to lengthen the religious services, which the fervor of the first Christians had already made long enough, it was decided not to inscribe on the diptychs any but the names of the greatest benefactors. This, however, proved insufficient, for even this list assumed undue proportions. Subsequently, in order not to prolong the services, the diptychs were placed on the altar, and the people prayed for all those whose names were inscribed thereon. Finally, for good reasons this practice was abandoned and was changed into the commemoration as we have it now. In many parochial churches the names of those who desire to have a Mass said for them in the course of the week are read on Sundays from the pulpit; this is an evident relic of the former reading of the diptychs.

The priest says: "Remember, O Lord!"—not



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AT THE MEMENTO FOR THE LIVING.



that God can forget, but to beseech Him that, mindful of His infinite mercy, He may grant us the favors requested. "Remember, O Lord, Thy servants and handmaids," so prays the priest, for all those whom the Church calls her own, with the humble feelings wherewith the Blessed Virgin exclaimed at the message of the angel: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord." The priest then joins his hands and remembers in silence those whom he desires to recommend to God in a particular manner. First he prays for the Church in general, for the Pope, the bishop, and all orthodox Christians; now he recommends to God in a particular manner his parents, his friends, and his benefactors. Although the fruits of the holy sacrifice of Mass are infinite in themselves, yet they are applied chiefly to those for whom a special prayer is offered. Tradition has it that the priest was always allowed to pray in particular for those in whose welfare he took a greater interest, without any detriment to those for whose intention the Mass is offered. This explains why it is a great honor, a great blessing to parents to be allowed to consecrate a son to the service of the altar; for they know that they have a special share in the fruits of

all the Masses which their son will offer to the Almighty; such a son does not forget his parents.

After a short prayer for those whom the priest wishes to recommend to God in a particular way, he continues with extended hands, and prays in particular for all present. "Hence it follows," says Pope Innocent III., "how holy and salutary it is to assist at Mass, because it is offered in a special manner for those present." But in order to partake of the fruits of the sacrifice, we should hear Mass with faith and devotion, with attention and becomingly, because the priest says: "Whose faith and devotion are known to Thee." The priest cannot speak to God in these terms of those Christians who behave in church as they do elsewhere, who seem not to care about what is done for them on the altar, and whose sole thought seems to be to divert themselves in a more or less unbecoming way. Those who are unable to assist at holy Mass may nevertheless partake of its fruits by uniting themselves to it, and desiring, were it possible, to assist at it with faith and devotion. The priest recommends to God the interests of the whole Church; he prays with extended



hands, like the Saviour on the cross, who offered His sacrifice for all mankind. "The words, 'For whom we offer Thee or who offer Thee,' clearly show," says St. Peter Damian, "that all the faithful, men and women, offer this sacrifice of praise to God; although it might appear that the priest alone offers it" (Lib. Dom., vol. i. cap. viii.).

Holy Mass is called here a sacrifice of praise; although this is generally applied to the Psalms, yet it may be said with greater force of the Mass, which is the most sublime glorification of God. The sacrifice is offered for all those whom the priest has named; it benefits not only those present, but all those whom they recommend to God; it is useful for body and soul. In union with the priest, the faithful ask for themselves and theirs all desirable spiritual and temporal blessings. They first pray for the redemption of their souls, which Mass brings about, because it is a propitiatory sacrifice. Holy Mass applies to the souls the merits of the Redeemer, that they may be purified from all stain and be found worthy to enter into the temple of eternal glory. The soul will enjoy perfect redemption and perfect happiness after its reunion with the body on Judgment Day. The faithful therefore offer

the sacrifice for the redemption of their souls, that is, to appease God's wrath and thereby to be preserved from all evil of sin and punishment. The holy Mass opens the treasures of God's mercy; the faithful offer it therefore "for the hope of their salvation," that is, to obtain from God all spiritual favors, grace in time and glory in eternity. For *well-being* we are to understand here, not only health of the body, but also happiness and success in temporal concerns. The diptych prayer ends with the words: "Who . . . pay their vows unto Thee." We must remark that the word *votum* does not always in ecclesiastical language mean *vow*; it means also an offering, and in this sense it should be understood here. This is therefore a repetition of the preceding "who offer to Thee this sacrifice of praise;" and whereas we have nothing from ourselves which we can give to God, by this offering we simply render to Him what He has given us. Although *votum* has to be understood here of the sacrificial elements, yet it means also a vow, because, as St. Augustine explains (Ep. 149 ad Paul), we promise what we offer to God, especially the oblation on the altar; we thereby renew and profess a promise which we made be-

fore, and by which we resolve to abide in Christ, as members of His mystic body.

The Church militant has now recommended to God the Vicar of Christ on earth, the bishop of the diocese, and in general all Catholics; in the third part of the first prayer the priest mentions another class of persons, who do not belong to the Church militant but to the Church triumphant. The Church knows that those who have already entered celestial glory are not separated from her, but ever remain united with her. The Church is divided into the Church militant, the Church suffering, and the Church triumphant, yet is always the same Church. During Mass therefore we present ourselves before God in company not only of the saints on earth, but also of the saints in heaven. This idea is expressed in this third part: "Communicating with and honoring in the first place the memory of the ever-glorious Virgin Mary, Mother of our Lord and God, Jesus Christ, as also of the blessed apostles and martyrs, Peter and Paul, Andrew, James, John, Thomas, James, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Simon, and Thaddeus, Linus, Cletus, Clement, Xystus, Cornelius, Cyprian, Lawrence, Chrysogonus, John and Paul, Cosmas and Damian.

and of all Thy saints, through whose merits and prayers grant that we may be always defended by the help of Thy protection. Through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen."

This third part of the first prayer of the Canon has for a title in the missal, *Infra Actionem* ("During the Action"). The holy sacrifice of Mass is an action indeed; it is the real renewal of what Christ did at the Last Supper; it is the greatest, most sublime, and holiest action. On five great feast-days of the ecclesiastical year, viz., Christmas, Epiphany, Easter, Ascension, and Pentecost, this prayer is slightly altered, particular mention being made of the mystery which the Church celebrates that day. This prayer is called also *Communicantes*, because it begins with that Latin word. We form a communion with the saints in heaven in four different ways. First, in faith, because we believe what they have believed regarding the Holy Eucharist. Secondly, in hope, because we hope what they looked for and now enjoy in full security. Thirdly, in charity, because it is the prerogative of charity to be increased and made perfect where faith and hope cease. Fourthly, in the receiving and offering of the same mystery

which was their strength in life and their Viaticum for the journey to the heavenly fatherland. The Church in venerating the memory of the saints follows the prescriptions made to the Jewish priests in the Old Testament. When the priest entered into the Holy of Holies he had with him the names of the twelve tribes written on his Rationale: the priest of the New Testament also venerates the memory of the Blessed Virgin, of the twelve apostles, and of twelve martyrs. The place of honor undoubtedly belongs to the Mother of God, because she surpasses angels and men and all creation. She it was who gave to the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity the body and blood which He offered for us on the cross, and even now daily offers on thousands of our altars. She it was who was honored above all other creatures. She it was in whom stainless purity was united to divine fecundity. No wonder then that the Church venerates in the first place the memory of the Virgin Mother. Then follow the apostles, who were witnesses of the institution of the holy sacrifice of Mass, who first received power and command to offer it to God, who first used the authority conferred on them, and to whom we

owe the principal ordinances regarding the celebration of holy Mass. Next come the holy martyrs, twelve in number, to wit, five popes, one bishop, one deacon, and five laymen, who were particularly honored in the first ages of Christianity, and this explains their mention in the Canon. The names of the apostles are not given in the same order that they occur in Holy Scripture respecting their selection to the apostolate. The apostles were the chosen missionaries who, as vicegerents of Christ, were to continue the work of Christ. We add a few edifying traits from the life and death of the saints mentioned in the Canon.

First come St. Peter and his inseparable companion in the ecclesiastical liturgy, St. Paul. Peter, or Simon, as he was first called, was born at Bethsaida, a little town on the western shore of Lake Genesareth. The Lord raised him from a common fisherman to be chief of the apostles, and His vicar for the universal Church. He was the first to preach the faith of Christ; and, after having journeyed through many countries, he established his see in the centre of the heathen world, in the city which was destined to be the capital of Christianity. After a life of self-sacri-



fice for the salvation of souls, he died the death of a martyr, June 29th, in the year 67 of our era. The bloodthirsty Nero had condemned him to be crucified. Peter, deeming himself unworthy to die in the same manner that his divine Master died, begged to be crucified head downward.

Paul, formerly called Saul, was born in the mercantile town of Tarsus, and possessed the rights of a Roman citizen. While still young he came to Jerusalem, where he studied under the famous Gamaliel. When the persecution broke out at Jerusalem against the Christians, Saul was one of the most furious persecutors. On the way to Damascus, whither he went to accomplish his nefarious plans, the Lord awaited him, and through a wonder of His mercy made of Saul a vessel of election, a chosen apostle. During the twenty years which he lived after his conversion, he crossed about thirty countries and islands to spread the Christian religion, exposing himself to all sorts of crosses and trials, till at the end he obtained the palm of martyrdom by being beheaded at Rome, in the fourteenth year of Nero's reign, on the same day that St. Peter was crucified.

Andrew was a brother of Simon and a disciple



of St. John the Baptist. When John on one occasion referred to Our Saviour by saying: "Behold the Lamb of God," Andrew followed Him and brought also his brother Simon to Him. After the Ascension of Christ, Andrew went to Scythia, and subsequently travelled over Epirus and Thracia, everywhere making innumerable converts to Christ by his words and wonders. At Patras, a city of Achaia in Greece, he was to meet his executioner. Ægeus, the proconsul, could not bear to see so many embrace the faith of Christ by the preaching of the apostle, and after satirizing the death of the Saviour he ordered the apostle to sacrifice to the gods. To this Andrew gave this memorable reply regarding the mystery of our altars: "I offer daily on the altar to the Almighty, who is the one and true God, not the flesh of oxen or the blood of goats, but the immaculate Lamb; and after all the faithful have partaken of its flesh, the Lamb always remains whole and living." After Andrew, who may rightly be called the apostle of the cross, had with holy liberty replied to the satire of Ægeus, he was condemned to the death of the cross. For two days he remained alive hanging on the cross, never ceasing to preach

the faith of Him whose follower he desired to be in His death, as the Church says in the office of the saint.

James, called the Major, was the brother of St. John and a son of Zebedee. He was one of the privileged disciples of Jesus; he was present with Peter and John at the raising to life of the daughter of Jairus, at the glorious transfiguration of Christ on Thabor, and at His agony on Mount Olivet. After the Ascension of Christ, James first preached the Gospel in Judea and Samaria, whence he went afterwards to Spain. He was the first of the apostles to drink, by his death, the chalice of the Lord. Nine or ten years after the death of Our Saviour, he was beheaded at Jerusalem by Herod Agrippa, during the reign of the Emperor Claudius.

John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was more favored by Our Lord than the other apostles, on account of his virginal chastity. He it was who, at the solemn moment of the institution of the Holy Eucharist, rested on Jesus' bosom, and drew plentifully light and love from Jesus' sacred heart. On Calvary he was to receive another mark of Jesus' predilection towards him. Hanging on the cross, the Saviour recommended

to him what was dearest to His heart, His own blessed Mother. He practised his apostolate in Palestine, but later on we find him at Ephesus. Under the Emperor Domitian he was dragged to Rome, where he was thrown into a vessel of boiling oil, but, through the particular protection of the Almighty, he came out unharmed and more vigorous than he was before. The tyrant sent him afterwards into captivity on the island of Patmos, where he wrote the Apocalypse. St. John outlived all the other apostles. He is not only apostle and martyr, but also evangelist and prophet.

Thomas, called also Didymus, was the last to believe in the Resurrection of Our Lord. Thanks to the loving condescension of Our Saviour towards him, taking occasion of his incredulity to heal the wounds of infidelity in our souls, St. Thomas became a foremost defender of the true faith. After the Ascension of Our Lord, he announced the joyful tidings to the Parthians, the Medes, and the Persians, and even penetrated into distant India, where his memory is held in the highest esteem. On his way thither he, as an old tradition claims, baptized the three kings. Having there spread the Chris-

tian faith with wonderful success, he was by order of a heathen king pierced with a lance, or, according to others, stoned to death.

James the Less was a relative of Our Lord, and was therefore called His brother. He was the only one of the apostles who did not preach the faith to the heathens. He was appointed by St. Peter first bishop of Jerusalem. Such was the holiness of his life that he was called the Just, and men deemed it a blessing to touch the hem of his garment. At the age of ninety-six, he was stoned by the Jews, and precipitated from the pinnacle of the temple. Lying half dead on the ground, he prayed God to forgive his executioners, and finally his head was cleft with a fuller's stick. The frightful destruction of Jerusalem, at the time of Titus, was by many considered a just punishment for the inhuman treatment of the holy and innocent apostle.

Philip was the fourth to be called by Our Saviour to the apostolate. He was born at Bethsaida. He brought Nathanael to Jesus. How confidently Our Lord conversed with Philip is clearly shown in Holy Scripture. When the heathens wished to see Jesus, they first addressed themselves to Philip. It was also Philip to

whom the Lord said before the multiplication of loaves in the desert: "Wherewith shall we buy bread to feed the multitude?" He preached the Gospel in Scythia, and ended his apostolic life at Hieropolis, a city of Phrygia. He was tied to a cross and stoned. The cross of St. Philip was of the same form as that of the Saviour, representing a Latin T.

Bartholomew seems to have been the only one among the apostles of noble birth and a philosopher. He preached the Gospel in Arabia Felix, in India, and in Greater Armenia. Here he converted the king with his wife, and twelve cities. This excited the rage of the pagan priests against him. They secured for their nefarious plans the co-operation of the king's brother. He caused the apostle to die the most cruel death imaginable. With inhuman ferocity, at Albanopolis, he had him flayed alive and then beheaded.

Matthew was called at Capharnaum by Our Saviour to follow Him; he was before his call a receiver of customs. After the Ascension of Our Lord, before beginning his apostolic career, Matthew wrote his gospel in Hebrew, for the use of the Jews especially. Then he departed for

Ethiopia, where by a miracle he converted the king, the queen, and the whole province. He raised to life the daughter of the king, and induced her to consecrate her virginity to God. This, however, was too much for Hortacus, who had proposed for the hand of Iphigenia. He had the apostle put to death by the sword, while he was at the altar celebrating the holy mysteries.

Simon and Thaddeus were brothers of James the Less, as is generally believed; others, however, assert that Simon was only a relative of Thaddeus and James. His zeal in spreading the faith earned for him the name of *Zelotes*, or the Zealous. He preached the Gospel in Egypt and Persia, where in the reign of Emperor Trojan he was sawed in two. Thaddeus, who is also called Judas, wrote a catholic epistle, in which he particularly exhorts the faithful to persevere in the right path, by placing before them the terrible example of the fallen angels and the horrors of the judgment to come. He preached the Gospel in Mesopotamia and in Persia, where he met St. Simon, and where he died a glorious death by being pierced with arrows.

The name of St. Matthias, who was elected in the place of Judas Iscariot, is intentionally



omitted in order not to exceed the mystic number of twelve. This is a figure of the universality of the Church of Christ, which in its unity of faith in the triune God extends to the four extremities of the earth,—a striking imitation of the heavenly Jerusalem, which St. John so beautifully describes in his Apocalypse (chap. xxi.). The heavenly Jerusalem has four walls and in each of them three gates, to admit at all times all peoples through Baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. These twelve gates were on foundations upon which were inscribed the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. So are also the apostles the foundation of the Church of Christ; for this reason is the Church apostolic.

To the twelve apostles are added an equal number of martyrs.

Linus, successor of St. Peter, was born at Volterra in Italy. He governed the Church twelve years, and was put to death by Saturninus, whose daughter he had previously delivered from the devil. He was buried beside St. Peter. During the Pontificate of Urban VIII., a sarcophagus was discovered, bearing this plain inscription: "Linus."





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AT THE HANC IGITUR.



Cletus succeeded Linus in the Papal office. Other writers claim that St. Clement was the third Pope. Although the desire to be a bishop is praiseworthy, yet St. Cletus would accept such an onerous dignity only upon the continued solicitation of St. Clement, whom St. Peter himself had selected as his successor. He received the crown of martyrdom under the Emperor Domitian.

Clement succeeded to Cletus and governed the Church from 91 to the end of the first century. St. Irenæus writes of him: "The third after St. Peter in the Roman episcopal see was Clement, who had seen the apostles Peter and Paul and had listened to their preaching." St. Paul calls him one of his colaborers, whose names are written in the book of life. He was banished by the Emperor Trajan, and in the place of his exile he suffered greatly for want of water. Clement prayed, and suddenly on a hill a lamb appeared, from under whose front feet a stream of clear water flowed. This miracle opened the eyes of a great many. Trajan then ordered the holy Pope to be thrown into the sea with a heavy anchor fastened about his neck. The Christians on the shore fell upon their knees and prayed,

and behold! the sea receded three thousand steps, and in the depth there was a temple of marble, built by angels, wherein was found the body of the saint. It appears that his relics were afterwards taken to Rome by SS. Cyril and Methodius.

In the first three centuries of Christianity there were two holy Popes named Xystus. It is generally admitted that the saint whose name is mentioned in the Canon is Xystus II.; the Church celebrates his feast on August 6th. He was a Greek by birth, and ruled the Church during the stormy days of the persecution of Valerian, who also put him to death. If in the Canon the order of succession of the Popes had been observed, Xystus would have come after Cornelius; but the order was here purposely inverted in order not to separate Cornelius from Cyprian, names which are always united in the ecclesiastical service. Possibly also the name of Cornelius was inscribed in the Canon later.

Cornelius ascended the throne of Peter in the year 251. He was the twentieth Pope. He was exiled to Civita Vecchia, where he died the death of a martyr, September 14th, 252; the same day

on which, six years later, Cyprian was martyred at Carthage. Their feast is celebrated on September 16th.

Cyprian was born of pagan parents, and passed many years in the darkness of heathenism, but once converted he endeavored with all his might to make up for the past. After his conversion in 245, he distributed all he possessed to the poor, and passed his time in prayer and in the study of the sacred sciences. Three years later he was raised to the episcopal see of Carthage. He was beheaded on September 14th, a few weeks after the death of SS. Xystus and Lawrence.

Lawrence is one of those saints who are held in the highest esteem by all nations. St. Leo the Great tells us in a discourse on the feast-day of that saint: "As Jerusalem was glorified by Stephen, so has Rome been glorified by Lawrence." Xystus II. appointed him archdeacon. The glorious confession of St. Lawrence is too well known to be repeated here. He was slowly roasted on a gridiron. The Emperor Constantine erected over his grave the splendid basilica of Lawrence outside the walls. It is one of the seven principal churches of Rome.

Next follow in the Canon the names of five laymen:

Chrysogonus converted in Rome a number of heathens to the true faith, and numbered among his disciples St. Anastasia, whose adviser and consoler he was in the midst of the most cruel persecutions which she had to endure for the faith. During the reign of the tyrant Diocletian, he was taken a prisoner, then exiled to Aquileia, and finally beheaded in the year 304.

John and Paul were brothers; they held high positions at the court of St. Constantia, daughter of Constantine the Great. They were merciful men indeed. The successor of Constantine, Julian the Apostate, desired to incorporate them among his servants and have them sacrifice to the gods, but they indignantly rejected his proposal. To revenge himself, Julian had them put to death by the sword.

Cosmas and Damian were also brothers, born of a noble race in Arabia. They were universally esteemed on account of their knowledge of medicine and their irreproachable life. Their disinterested charity won the hearts of a great many to the true faith. After many sufferings, they were finally beheaded at Ægea. It is gen-

erally admitted that these two brothers are mentioned in the Canon; but, as there are three other saints of the same name, it is not absolutely certain. According to some, Cardinal Bona among them, the saints mentioned in the Canon were Italians, who died martyrs some time before these two brothers, and after whom these were probably named.

With these the Church closes the list of saints mentioned in this part of the Canon. She recommends herself, however, to God through the merits of all the saints. It is related that Constantine the Great while visiting Cæsarea asked Bishop Eusebius what he could do for his church. Eusebius replied: "Lord, my church is rich enough, but I beg you to send messengers to other parts of the world to find out the names of the saints and the time of their martyrdom." The emperor complied with the bishop's request; it was found that for every day of the year there were more than five thousand saints, except for the first day of January, because on that day the pagans celebrated their feasts and left the Christians more or less in peace. If the saints were so numerous during the first three centuries of Christianity, they must be almost



innumerable now. We ask God at the end of this prayer that by the merits and the intercession of that innumerable host of saints we may continually enjoy His protection. The priest then joins his hands and ends the prayer with these words: "Through Christ Our Lord. Amen." He himself answers Amen, because his voice will not be heard again by the congregation till the Pater Noster.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### FROM THE SECOND PRAYER TO THE CON- SECRATION.

THE priest now extends his hands over the oblation and says the second prayer of the Canon: "We, therefore, beseech Thee, O Lord, graciously to accept this oblation of our servitude, as also of Thy whole family; and to dispose our days in Thy peace, preserve us from eternal damnation, and rank us in the number of Thine elect. 'Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.'" This prayer undergoes a slight change on three great feast-days of the year, viz.: on Holy Thursday, when special mention is made of the institution of the Blessed Eucharist; on Easter and Pentecost, when special prayers are offered for the newly baptized; and also at the consecration of a bishop. The beginning of the prayer indicates that it is connected with the preceding prayer and is a continuation of the same. We pray to God, not alone, but in union with all His

saints. Full of confidence in their merits and intercession, we venture to address ourselves to God and ask Him graciously to receive these gifts from our hands. By this oblation we still designate bread and wine, destined to be changed into the body and blood of Christ. Bread and wine are here called "this oblation of our servitude and of Thy whole family." These words indicate, first, that the sacrifice is offered by the whole Church, by priests and faithful and for the common welfare. Two different meanings may further be attached to those words. According to some, "this oblation of our servitude" regards those present, that is, the priest and all those who attend the Mass; while the offering of "Thy whole family" refers to all those who are absent but are in communion with the Church. Other writers understand by the first part the priest and the ministers at the altar, and by the second the faithful, chiefly those who participate in the sacrifice. Be that as it may, it is in either case more the offering of the priest than of the faithful, inasmuch as he has been called to offer to Him the propitiatory sacrifice and to act as mediator between God and men. As for the faithful, so likewise for the priest holy Mass is

“the oblation of our servitude;” because Mass is offered to God to acknowledge His infinite dominion over all creatures and to express our unworthiness. As creatures who are indebted for our existence to God, and are entirely dependent upon Him, we owe Him a particular service; we are obliged to honor Him, to adore Him; in other words, to offer Him the homage of our servitude; this is the principal end of Mass, which is the most excellent act of religion.

Priest and faithful then beg of God graces and blessings for time and eternity in virtue of the eucharistic offering, not indeed in virtue of the bread and wine, but in virtue of the adorable body and blood of Christ into which these elements will be changed. For this temporal life we ask that God may direct our days in His peace, and for eternity that we may be preserved from eternal damnation and be numbered among His elect. The request that God might dispose our days in His peace was inserted in this prayer by St. Gregory the Great, at the time the Lombards besieged Rome and the city was in the greatest danger. The Church has left unchanged the words of St. Gregory, written at the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Three times

we ask peace of God, in order that, as Pope Innocent III. remarks, “from *the peace of time* through *the peace of heart* we may be admitted to *the peace of eternity*.” We ask God that His peace may always guide us in the midst of the trials of this life, in order that, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, we may serve Him all our days in holiness and justice (Luke i. 74). The rest we only ask in so far as it may serve to attain that end. That peace itself must be a means to attain our last end, that is, eternal salvation, and be freed from eternal misfortune. By these three requests we acknowledge the threefold supremacy of God on earth, in heaven, and in hell. Heretics might object that the purpose of this prayer is altogether useless, since God from all eternity foresees who will be numbered among His elect; a prevision which in any case will be realized. St. Thomas replies that we do not ask God that His ordinances may be changed, but that we may obtain through the prayers of the saints that what He has ordained may be fulfilled (2, 2 Qu. 83, art. 1 ad 2). It is certain that he only who shall have faithfully fought will be crowned, and that the just Judge will repay every one according to his merits.

We live in the uncertainty of a sick man, for instance, uncertain of regaining his health; with the positive knowledge, however, that if he does not use the medicines prescribed he will not regain it, and with the well-grounded hope that he will recover if he seriously wills it. He only will be punished who does not use the means. We justly, therefore, ask God for the graces we need, that we may use the means towards attaining that end. We ask those graces through the merits of Him whom God cannot refuse, "through Our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

While the priest says the foregoing prayer he holds his hands extended over the oblation; this simple action has a very important meaning. This extending of the hands, in the Old as in the New Testament, is the figure of the translation of a thing, good or indifferent in itself, into another. We find this expressly mentioned in Leviticus viii. 14. After Moses, at the command of God, had anointed Aaron to be the high-priest, he immolated a calf as a propitiatory sacrifice for sin, "and when Aaron and his sons had put their hands upon the head thereof, he immolated it." The Israelites in general, and the acting priest in particular, knew that they were but miserable

sinner in the presence of God; that, as transgressors of the law of God, they were guilty of death; the priest shows himself ready to suffer death to reconcile the offended majesty of God. But God does not desire the death of the sinner; He had already forbidden the shedding of human blood (Gen. ix. 6). Besides, the death of the culprit could not give God adequate satisfaction. Sin is an infinite offence, which can only be atoned by an offering of infinite value. To do all in their power in order to be admitted to God's friendship again, the Israelites substituted for themselves the life of an irrational animal as a sacrifice. This animal, however, was not to be blamed for the sins of the people; in order then that the immolation of it might be a propitiatory sacrifice for sin, it became necessary that it should be charged with the sins of mankind, and this was done by the extending of the hands. In the New Law this figure has its fulfilment; during Mass, immediately before the Consecration, and as a near preparation to the death of the Lamb, the priest lays his hands on the elements to signify that he presents an innocent offering instead of one that is guilty of death. For Jesus, the High-Priest and the Victim of the



New Law, has assumed our infirmities and taken our sufferings upon Himself. "He was wounded for our iniquities" (Is. liii.), and in His blood has prepared for us a salutary bath, wherein we may be cleansed from our sins. The priest now begins the great prayer, which includes also the essential part of the sacrifice, namely, the Consecration, and extends to the Commemoration of the Dead. Joining his hands, he says: "Which oblation do Thou, O God, we beseech Thee, vouchsafe to make in all things blessed, ✠ approved, ✠ ratified, ✠ rational, and acceptable: that it may become for us the body ✠ and blood ✠ of Thy dearly beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ." We have already given the meaning of the five crosses, as explained by St. Thomas.

Holy Mass is a sacrifice blessed in all respects. This is true, first, of the material elements which are on the altar before consecration; they are separated from all worldly use, and after being sanctified by many blessings they are found worthy to be changed into the adorable body and blood of Our Lord. We now pray that God may vouchsafe to make this offering blessed in all respects, that is, that these lifeless elements may receive the highest possible blessing; in that

sense is consecration called by the holy Fathers a blessing. The sacrifice is also blessed because it is the renewal of the sacrifice of the cross, whereas the offerer and the offering are the blessed One who comes in the name of the Lord. The sacrifice is further blessed because it is to us a source of all blessings.

Christ in holy Mass is the approved Victim. The interpreters of the Mass do not agree in the translation and signification of the Latin word *adscriptam*. According to the learned Suarez, the word refers to what is written in Scripture about the consecration, that it is necessary for this offering to be such as was ordered and promised by these words of the Saviour: "Do this in commemoration of Me." We may call *adscriptam* that which is conformable to what is written. Holy Mass is an approved offering in the sense that, in as far as the substance is concerned, it perfectly agrees with the first Mass, celebrated by Our Lord Himself at the Last Supper.

If Mass is offered according to the command of Christ, then it must necessarily be a *ratified* offering, that is, a true and valid offering. We pray God that the oblation may be ratified, that it may be a true and valid oblation, because it

would not be a true sacrifice if the consecration were not true and valid. On the cross the oblation was completed when Christ exclaimed: "It is consummated;" during Mass Christ is sacrificed as soon as the words of the consecration have been pronounced over the bread and the wine.

We further ask God that this offering may be a *rational* offering. To understand the meaning of this, we must remember what the sacrifices of the Old Law were. They were generally goats and calves; these victims had of course no efficacy except as figures of the sacrifice of the cross. The body and blood of Christ are on the altar the real sacrifice which makes all others superfluous, even useless. Holy Mass is a rational sacrifice, because on the altar the eternal and uncreated Wisdom is sacrificed.

If the holy sacrifice possesses these four qualities, it will necessarily be acceptable. What could be more pleasing to God than that humanity united to the divinity, that beautiful and stainless soul, that blood which flows in the virgin body? We must remark that the priest does not pray that God in His omnipotence may change these material elements into the body and blood of Christ, but that this may be done

*for us*; that the consecration, or, in other words, the real sacrifice, may be profitable to us. The priest asks thereby that we may be *blessed* in all things through the grace of God; that we may be enrolled among the elect in the book of life; that we may be *ratified* and confirmed in the service of God; that we may be *rational*, subjecting body and passions to reason and reason itself to God; in order that we may be also *acceptable* to God and be received some day into His heavenly kingdom.



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AT THE ELEVATION OF THE HOST.



## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE CONSECRATION.

ALL the preceding prayers and actions are a preparation to the *Consecration*. The moment of consecration is the most important, the most solemn, the most sublime moment of the Mass; Consecration is the consummation of the eucharistic sacrifice. By the words of consecration the substance of bread and wine is changed into the substance of the body and blood of Christ. This is the miracle of Him whose power knows no limits. But with this act of divine omnipotence a human act is also required, viz., the co-operation of a lawful priest. At his ordination the priest receives power to pronounce the same words, which have also the same effect, whereby the Saviour changed bread and wine into His adorable body and blood. At the Last Supper Jesus was the only offerer; in holy Mass He offers Himself through the ministry of His priests. The priest at the altar is like another



Christ. It is manifest from all that precedes that the priest imitates as much as possible what the Saviour Himself did, according to the testimony of Holy Scripture; at the moment of consecration he proceeds still further and speaks in the person of Christ Himself.

The priest now wipes the tips of his fingers on the altar-cloth, for the hands which in a moment will hold the King of glory cannot be too clean; the soul of the priest should be pure from all stain. He then takes the bread in his hands and says: "Who the day before He suffered, took bread into His holy and venerable hands, and with eyes lifted up towards heaven unto Thee, O God, His almighty Father, giving thanks to Thee, did bless, ✠ break, and gave unto His disciples, saying: 'Take and eat ye all of this. For this is My body.'"

Three evangelists, namely, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and also St. Paul, in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, mention how Jesus performed this great mystery. Although all four do not exactly give the same words, they are one in as far as the essence is concerned. They tell us what the Saviour did at that awful moment and what the priests will do to the end of time. The

words which do not occur in Holy Scripture are of apostolic tradition, and are equally as certain and as inspired by the Holy Ghost as Scripture itself. On Holy Thursday, to the words "Who the day before He suffered" are added the following: "for our salvation and that of all." What striking circumstance do not these words bring to our mind! Jesus chooses the eve of His passion and death, the night on which He will be betrayed, to give us, in the institution of the Blessed Sacrament, the most wonderful mark of His love. With a burning desire He had looked forward to this moment. Before shedding His blood in streams on the painful journey to Calvary, He instituted the Sacrament of the Altar for ungrateful men, that they might never forget what He had done and suffered for them. This circumstance of time was inserted in the Canon by Alexander I., the sixth successor of St. Peter.

"Jesus took bread into His holy and venerable hands." At these words the priest also takes the bread into his hands. Holy and venerable indeed are the hands of Christ. How often were they not raised to His eternal Father and extended over men to load them with blessings!

Such also must be the hands of the priest; they were anointed at his ordination, but this is not sufficient: his works must correspond to the holiness required of him.

“And with eyes lifted up towards heaven, unto Thee, O God, His almighty Father, giving thanks to Thee, did bless the bread.” While the priest utters these words, to imitate as much as possible the example of the Saviour, he lifts his eyes to the cross, respectfully bows his head, and makes the sign of the cross over the host. These were the actions of Our Saviour at the institution of the Holy Eucharist. How unfounded therefore are the objections of certain heretics, who dare assert that the ecclesiastical ceremonies are inventions of popes and bishops. The Lord Himself has sanctioned many of them by His own example. In the desert, when He was about to multiply the loaves in order to feed the hungry multitude, He first lifted His eyes to heaven; who would doubt that He did the same when instituting this spiritual banquet, although it be not expressed in Holy Scripture? We need not observe, however, that this uplifting of the eyes to His Father and this thanksgiving do not imply that the Son is less than the Father; these

are simply acts of homage from Humanity to the Divinity. He thanks His Father for the blessings which He has showered upon mankind, and this thanksgiving and blessing are preparatory to the substantial change of the elements. To operate this wonderful change, He acts as God in union with the Father and the Holy Ghost.

“Broke and gave to His disciples, saying, ‘Take and eat ye all of this.’” The evangelists mention four different actions of the Saviour at the institution of the Holy Eucharist. First, He thanks His heavenly Father and then blesses the bread. These two actions and many blessings conveniently precede the Consecration. The Preface in particular is that solemn giving of thanks. After the Consecration the priest breaks the sacramental species, and distributes them to the faithful.

The priest, bowing down before the altar, now pronounces as vicegerent of Christ, with profound respect and great attention, the words of consecration over the bread: “For this is My body.” It is no longer bread, for under the remaining appearances of bread the body of Christ is now really present; in a moment Divine Omnipotence has worked a miracle to which all other wonders

of nature are insignificant. The little Host contains in itself more wonders, more riches and treasures than could be found in the rest of creation. In the little Host is really present the body of Christ, not the passible body which He had on earth, but the glorified and immortal body which now shines in heaven, and in whose veins flows the most precious blood; that body vivified by the holiest soul and united with the divinity; in other words, Christ as He is now in heaven. The gates of heaven open, and Christ descends, surrounded by legions of angels, to veil Himself at the words which the priest pronounces, under the material appearances of bread. The priest may truthfully say: "I hold in my hands my Creator, my Saviour, and Supreme Judge." No wonder then that he respectfully bows the knee to adore his Lord and Master, and desires to communicate these sentiments to the faithful present; therefore he elevates the sacred Host over his head that He, the Lord and Maker of all, may be adored by them also.

The bread has been substantially changed into the body of Christ; the wine remains still to be changed into His blood. The priest then

pronounces the following words for the consecration of the chalice: "In like manner, after He had supped, taking also this excellent chalice into His holy and venerable hands and giving Thee thanks, He blessed and gave to His disciples, saying: 'Take and drink ye all of this: for this is the chalice of My blood of the new and eternal Testament: the mystery of faith, which shall be shed for you and for many unto the remission of sins. As often as ye do these things, ye shall do them in remembrance of Me.'"

"In like manner, after He had supped, taking also this excellent chalice into His . . . hands." At these words the priest takes the chalice into his hands and raises it a little. The Fathers of the Church, particularly St. John Chrysostom and St. Thomas Aquinas, are of opinion that Jesus first ate the Paschal lamb with His disciples, according to the prescriptions of the law. The Paschal lamb, as described in Exodus, chapter xii., was a figure of the real Paschal Lamb of the New Testament. At the Last Supper the shadow made place for the substance, the figure for the reality. After Our Lord had then eaten the mystic Paschal lamb with His disciples, He



changed the bread into His adorable body, and immediately afterwards the wine into His divine blood. Jesus then took this excellent chalice into His hands. The word *chalice* has three different significations: 1. Chalice is taken in Holy Scripture for passion. So we read in St. Matthew that, when the wife of Zebedee asked Our Saviour the first places in His kingdom for her sons, he answered: "Can you drink the chalice which I will drink?" *Chalice* in this passage means passion. 2. Chalice means also the vessel which contains the drink. 3. Finally, chalice means the drink which is contained in the chalice. During holy Mass the word *chalice* is taken in the second or third sense. When the priest, speaking of Christ, says that "He took this excellent chalice into His hands," this has to be understood not of the vessel which the priest holds in his hands, nor of the composition of the chalice, because it is not proved that the Lord consecrated in a golden or silver chalice; but it has to be understood of what is contained in the chalice, namely, the wine. The chalice on the altar and the chalice at the Last Supper resemble each other in so far—both contain the same drink, namely, wine; after the Consecra-



tion there is no difference between the contents of both chalices; then there is on the altar, as at the Last Supper, nothing in the chalice but the blood of Christ. The Church calls this chalice *excellent*, in reference to what it will soon contain; because in virtue of the words, "For this is the chalice of My blood," the wine is changed into the blood of Christ. The words that follow, although not necessary to operate this substantial change, are required, however, to complete the form. Theologians in general are of opinion that Our Lord Himself pronounced all these words; they show us the value and the operations of the eucharistic offering.

The blood which is now in the chalice is the "blood of the new and eternal Testament." At the foot of Mount Sinai was confirmed, by the blood of animals, the Old Testament, the ordinances of which were earthly and were to last only for a time. By the blood of Christ a new Testament is entered upon and confirmed; it is called eternal for two reasons: first, because the goods and blessings which it secures for us are heavenly and imperishable; secondly, because it will last unto the end of time. The words immediately following, "the mystery of faith,"

refer to the unfathomable depths of the mysteries of the Mass. Faith alone makes it possible for us to believe that a God, after having shed His blood on the cross for miserable sinners, should continue to offer it for us on our altars. The concluding words of the second consecration, "which shall be shed for you and for many," present a seeming difficulty. Literally these words would signify that the blood of Christ would be shed for the apostles present with the Lord at table, and for *many* others. But faith teaches us that Christ died not for a few, but for all. Every difficulty disappears when we understand by *many* "*the many*," because the blood of Christ was really shed for all men. By *many*, however, may be understood also the elect only, because they only benefited by the shedding of that divine blood. Christ offered Himself even for Judas, but that man of perdition did not co-operate with the grace offered him.

Having pronounced the words of consecration over the chalice, the priest kneels respectfully to adore his God, hidden under the sacramental species. He then elevates the chalice so that He may be adored by the people. This ceremony

is an outward profession of our faith in the mystery of the real presence of Christ in the Blessed Eucharist. The Church introduced this practice when certain heretics carried their ingratitude so far as to deny the words of Christ Himself. While the priest performs this ceremony he says: "As often as ye do these things, ye shall do them in remembrance of Me." By these words the Lord gave to His apostles and through them to all priests the power to do what He had done. At the solemn moment of consecration it is not man who speaks, but Jesus Himself, who speaks through the ministry of man. The altar and what happens on it carry our thoughts to Calvary, and tell us what Victim God's justice demanded. This Victim was in Itself sufficient to redeem a thousand worlds like ours. Our Saviour willed, however, that this oblation should be perpetuated. He can die no more, yet, knowing human weakness, He feared that the offering of Calvary, once consummated, would make no lasting impression on the faithful. Men might consider it as a great historical fact, which even, perhaps, only a few would look up in the annals of the Church. Therefore He instituted this mystery of love, by which it became possi-

ble to Him, although immortal and impassible, to sacrifice Himself for the salvation of men to the end of time. Jesus is on our altars as a sacrifice, not only because the separate consecration represents His real death on the cross, but rather on account of the state and the purpose of the body and blood of Christ under the sacramental species. Never was victim more really immolated than Our Saviour is after the words of consecration have been pronounced over the bread and the wine. He who is the glory of God, He in whose presence all creation is as a mere nothing, deigns to conceal Himself under the appearance of a little host. His life and His beauty, which make the joy of the angels, have no other purpose than to come unto us and be united with us. Who, at the consideration of these truths, would not burn with love for Him who gave Himself to us without reserve?

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE FIRST PRAYER AFTER THE CONSECRATION.

THE Consecration is the centre of the Mass. As many prayers and ceremonies precede it to prepare us for it, so the Church after Consecration interweaves a beautiful crown of prayers and ceremonies, as a worthy sequence and conclusion of the holy sacrifice of the Mass. The priest with extended hands then begins the following prayer, which is composed of three parts:

I. "Wherefore, O Lord, we, Thy servants, as also Thy holy people, calling to mind the blessed passion of the same Christ, Thy Son, Our Lord, together with His resurrection from the grave and also His glorious ascension into heaven, offer unto Thy excellent Majesty, of Thy gifts and presents, a pure ✠ Host, a holy ✠ Host, an immaculate ✠ Host, the holy ✠ bread of eternal life and the Chalice ✠ of everlasting salvation."

II. "Upon which do Thou vouchsafe to look down with favorable and gracious countenance,

and accept them, as Thou wert graciously pleased to accept the gifts of Thy just servant Abel, and the sacrifice of our patriarch Abraham, and that which Thy high-priest Melchisedech offered unto Thee, a holy sacrifice, an immaculate Host."

III. "We humbly beseech Thee, O Almighty God: command these gifts to be carried by the hands of Thy holy angel to Thy sublime altar before the sight of Thy Divine Majesty, that as many of us as shall, by partaking at this altar, receive the most holy ✠ body and ✠ blood of Thy Son, may be enriched by every heavenly blessing and grace. Through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen."

### *First Part.*

In the Apocalypse St. John relates that he saw in one of his visions the wonderful Lamb *as immolated*; with more reason can we say the same of the Lamb of God after the words of consecration have been pronounced over the bread and the wine. Jesus indeed dies no more; death has no longer dominion over Him; yet He is sacrificed in a moral manner at each Mass by the sword of the consecrating

words; He is as annihilated under the cover of the sacramental species. The blood is not seen flowing as it did on Calvary, but the same love which consumed Him on the cross now glows in His divine heart. On the cross He was His own Offerer; on the altar we offer Him also, and so He is our offering. This offering, as we have remarked, is consummated by the words of consecration. By the prayers and ceremonies that follow we confirm that offering; these prayers and actions add an accidental perfection, a greater brilliancy to the oblation. It is undeniable that this is most appropriate, since the living Sacrifice, Jesus Christ, is really present on the altar under the species of bread and wine. The first word of this prayer, "Wherefore," explicitly indicates that this prayer is a consequence of what immediately precedes, as Cardinal Bona beautifully explains: "After Consecration the command of Christ is mentioned in all liturgies, whereby He orders that the same oblation should be offered for His remembrance. For who would dare approach the altar of God and celebrate these unspeakable mysteries, if the Lord, who instituted this sublime sacrifice, had not commanded it? Therefore has the Church,



obeying the command of Christ, ordered that we should say as follows: 'Wherefore, Lord,' " etc.

"We, Thy servants, as also Thy holy people." "We, Thy servants," applies to the priests; "Thy holy people" to the faithful. In order well to understand why the Church here uses the plural, "We, Thy servants," we should remember that for many centuries, especially on great feast-days, the priests celebrated Mass together with the bishop. This practice prevailed still in the days of Pope Innocent III., as he himself testifies, and is even now observed in the Latin Church at the ordination of a priest or the consecration of a bishop, when the new priest or bishop celebrates together with the consecrating bishop and receives holy communion from his hands. The priests are in a particular manner servants of God; they are the privileged servants whom the Lord admits to His intimate friendship. The bishop at the ordination of a priest repeats the same words which the Lord spoke to His disciples in His farewell address: "I will not now call you servants, but friends, because you know all whatsoever I have done in your midst." As the priests are the special servants of God, so are the true faithful the cherished people of God.



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AT THE ELEVATION OF THE CHALICE.



If in the Old Testament the Jewish people were called the chosen people of God, because the Lord favored them more than others, with all the more reason then can the Church call her children "God's own people." This, however, is not sufficient; the Church calls them a *holy* people, since by Baptism God has adopted them for His children, loaded them with graces, and poured upon them the spirit of sanctification; they have only to co-operate with God to be really holy. Priests and faithful join in a grateful remembrance of the Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension of Christ. The Church reminds us of these three facts in preference to others, because these are necessary to give us an idea of Christ and His work on earth, as we have explained before. The Passion of Christ paid the price of our redemption and overcame death; the Resurrection of Christ inspires us with hope and confidence in our future resurrection; the Ascension opens the gates of heaven, and shows us the way to our heavenly home. The bitter Passion of Our Lord is called in this prayer *blessed* Passion, because it was to us sinners the source of all blessings; blessed it is, not in itself but in its consequences. Penetrated with a grateful re-

membrance of the Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension of Our Lord, we present to the excellent majesty of the eternal Father an offering which we owe to His merciful kindness. The material elements, which by the words of consecration have been changed into the body and blood of Christ, are His *gifts and presents*. These words are none the less true when applied to Christ present under the sacramental species, because Christ Himself is a gift of God to humanity. During holy Mass we return to God what we have received from Him. Our offering is most worthy of the Almighty, because it is the *clean* oblation foretold by Malachias, which takes the place of all the sacrifices of the Old Law; it is a *pure, holy, and immaculate* offering, because it is the God of all purity and holiness Himself. The flesh of the God-Man is the bread of eternal life; His blood the chalice of everlasting salvation; both together are the holy banquet—“*sacrum convivium*.” It was the intention of Our Saviour that this divine banquet was to be for us the great means whereby we are to attain our last end, eternal salvation. He has more than once assured us that whosoever eats His flesh and drinks His blood shall have life

eternal. While the priest says the above prayer, he makes five crosses over the oblation, and since this is after the Consecration the body and blood of Christ, the question obviously presents itself, why does the priest still bless the oblation which is the source of all blessings? Would the priest be presumptuous enough to bless Jesus Christ Himself? Certainly not. Before the Consecration the priest blessed the bread, because he was empowered to do so. But it is not bread which he holds now in his hands; the Giver and Source of all graces is now present on the altar. And yet the priest blesses the oblation, not to make something holy of that which is unholy, but to show that this sacrifice is the same as the sacrifice of the cross, equally pure and holy; he makes the sign of the cross separately over the body to signify that it is the same body which was crucified for us; and afterwards over the chalice to show that it contains the same blood which flowed for us on the cross. "The blessings which by crosses are made on the body of the Lord," says the eloquent Bossuet, "regard not this divine body, but only those who shall receive it; or should they refer to the body of Christ, then it is to signify the graces and bless-



ings with which Jesus is filled, and which He desires to communicate to us plentifully, provided our unfaithfulness make no obstacle; or finally we bless in Jesus Christ all His members, whom we offer in this sacrifice as forming one body with Jesus, that the blessings of the Head may abundantly be communicated to the members." It is easy to understand the crosses after Consecration when we keep in mind what St. Thomas says, that the consecration of this sacrament and the acceptance of this offering with the fruit thereof proceed from the power of the cross, and therefore the priest makes the sign of the cross whenever mention is made of any of these.

### *Second Part.*

In order to understand rightly the meaning of this second part, wherein we pray that God may graciously look down on the oblation we present to Him, we must recall to our mind what happened at the Offertory. The priest then poured a drop of water into the wine; mankind was represented thereby, because it gave through Mary humanity to Jesus. The Church, that is, the gathering of all the faithful, is united with



Jesus, even in the sacrifice, so that holy Mass is not only the offering of Jesus, but also of the Church and of us who are the members of His mystic body. In this sense the priest admonished the faithful before that His sacrifice might be acceptable to God the Father Almighty. By the Consecration Jesus offers Himself through the Holy Ghost and the co-operation of a visible priest to His heavenly Father for His honor and our salvation. He leaves Himself then to the Church, and the Church continues the sacrifice, that is, offers to the eternal Father the Lamb divine and immolated. To understand why we pray God to look down graciously on the Victim which He necessarily loves as Himself, we must consider that the Church offers and is offered with Christ. The value of the sacrifice depends not only upon the worthiness of the Victim but also upon the excellence of the one who sacrifices. So did God graciously look down upon the sacrifice of Abel and reject that of Cain, because, as St. Cyprian says, "God did not consider their presents but their hearts," so that the present of the one who pleased Him in his heart was also acceptable to Him. If we consider then the Church, the priest, and the faithful as co-offerers

with Christ, we do not ask in vain that God may graciously look down upon the sacrifice which is also ours. By this we do not mean, of course, that our dispositions can add in any way to the value of the sacrifice, which of itself is infinite. No; the infinite cannot be increased or made more valuable; but that does not prevent God from receiving the infinite offering more graciously from pure and holy hands, which offer no obstacles to the workings of the offering. There is no doubt but that the Church, or at least the priest and the faithful, may be differently disposed. Quite naturally then we pray to God not to take into account our unworthiness, but to receive the offering graciously from our unworthy hands, that we may partake of its fruits. In the same light are to be understood the comparisons which the Church uses, imploring God graciously to accept the sacrifice. Between the sacrifices of Abel, Abraham, and Melchisedech and the holy sacrifice of the Mass, considering Christ alone as Victim and Priest, there is no more resemblance than between the finite and the infinite, the temporal and the eternal; there is an infinite difference between them. These comparisons must then be understood as expressing that our dis-

positions should be similar to the dispositions of those holy patriarchs, not as conveying the idea that their offerings can in any way be compared with the value of the sacrifice of the Mass. The Church selects from the Old Testament the three most striking figures of the mystery of our altar. Abel offered the best lamb of his flock. St. Paul, writing about him in his Epistle to the Hebrews (xi. 4) says that by faith he "offered to God a sacrifice exceeding that of Cain; by which God gave him a testimony that he was just." Abel was indeed a servant of God. With faith and humble simplicity he offered to God a lamb, which was a figure of the divine Lamb that is daily sacrificed on our altars. Abel was murdered by his brother Cain; one more trait of resemblance between him and the innocent Jesus, whom His own people rejected and nailed to the cross.

Abraham was chosen by God to be the father of all the faithful; we call him, therefore, in this prayer our patriarch. God had promised him that he would be the father of a numerous progeny, but his faith had first to be subjected to a severe trial. God tells him: "Take thy son and sacrifice him on the mountain which I will

show thee." Abraham obeys, and departs with the son whom he loved so tenderly. A real sacrifice was not required. God is satisfied with the readiness and resignation of the great patriarch; his offering was only a spiritual offering. God is pleased with it, and commands him to spare his son; instead of the life of Isaac that of a dumb beast is sacrificed. Abel and Abraham are mentioned here in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who offered to His heavenly Father His life, His glory, all without reserve. The offering of Abel was the first bloody victim; that of Abraham was unbloody and only spiritual, yet so pleasing to God that it made him worthy to be the head of the family of Christ, in whose veins flows the blood of the father of the faithful. The offering of Abraham, says St. John Chrysostom, was to be an unbloody offering, because it was to be a figure of the unbloody sacrifice of the New Law.

In addition to the two foregoing sacrifices, mention is also made in this prayer of a third sacrifice, namely, that of the high-priest Melchisedech. It is the general opinion that Melchisedech was the first to offer bread and wine

to the Almighty, to honor Him, and also to thank Him for the victory which Abraham had won. He distributed afterwards these sanctified offerings to Abraham and his soldiers. A beautiful figure of the sacrifice of the Mass! That this offering must have been acceptable to God appears from the fact that, when God chose to honor His Son, He tells Him: "Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech" (Ps. cix. 4). Melchisedech offered to the Lord bread and wine; before the Consecration there are also bread and wine on the altar; and after the Consecration, when the substances of bread and wine have been changed by a miracle the appearances remain. We can easily imagine with what sentiments of love and devotion the saints of the Old Law offered their sacrifices. The offerers of the New Law—the priests and the faithful—should endeavor not only to resemble those saints but to excel them, that God may graciously accept the sacrifice from their hands. The concluding words of this second part, "A holy sacrifice, an immaculate Host," are considered by some as the object of "graciously pleased to accept;" by others as an apposition to the sacrifice of Melchisedech,

which was a holy sacrifice, an immaculate host, not in itself, but in reference to the sacrifice of the New Law, of which it was a figure.

### *Third Part.*

Bowing down profoundly before the altar, the priest says the third part, which presents greater difficulties than the two foregoing, chiefly because what the priest now asks cannot be taken in the literal sense of the words. When the priest says, "Command these [gifts] to be carried by the hands of Thy holy angel," these words cannot be interpreted as meaning a real translation to heaven of the body and blood of Christ, resting on the altar. By the demonstrative pronoun *these* we must understand the gifts, as explained in the second part, namely, not only the mystic body of Christ, that is, the faithful, with all they are and all they have, their prayers, trials, needs, etc., but also the real body and blood of Christ, inasmuch as they are our offering. To make it intelligible we must answer these two questions: 1. Who is meant by this holy angel? 2. What is meant by God's sublime altar? The famous rubricist, Abbot Guéranger, is of opinion that the angel here



mentioned is not an ordinary angel or archangel, not even a cherub or seraph, because they cannot grant the request of the priest. Angel means ambassador; the Son of God was, as He Himself says, sent by His Father. He is the Angel by excellence, the Angel of the Great Council, as Holy Scripture calls Him. This opinion will be further illustrated by the answer we give to the second question. Others, however, are inclined to think that, although this interpretation may be the true one, it implies violence to the text to understand here by angel anything but a created being. What we ask God is not the work of His omnipotence, whereby bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ—this has been done already by the words of consecration—but a work of mediation applicable also to the heavenly spirits. A numerous host of angels surrounds, undoubtedly, the altar whereon their Lord and King reposes; it is not impossible that here the singular is used for the plural and that by *angel* all the heavenly spirits are meant who surround the altar. Should we take it in the literal sense, it would then be a mere conjecture further to determine the personality of that angel. Often



in Christian tradition an angel is mentioned whose particular duty it is to present our prayers and sacrifices before the throne of God. Possibly God has entrusted to an angel the particular mission to bring the offering of priests and faithful before Him. Others understand by that angel the patron angel of the Church or of the altar on which the Mass is said; others again the guardian angel of the priest, or St. Michael, the guardian angel of the Holy Eucharist and of the Church militant.

In answer to the second question, What is understood by God's sublime altar? it is impossible to give a definite reply. It is certain, however, that in heaven there cannot be an altar, properly speaking, because there is no real sacrifice as here below. St. John speaks in the Apocalypse of a heavenly altar, on which he saw "a Lamb standing as it were slain" (v. 6). "The Lamb *stands*," says St. John, but he immediately adds, "*as it were slain*." The Saviour will always retain the impress of His sacred wounds, but now they are glittering with glory. The Lamb stands, because it lives and cannot die again. That is the altar on which the Saviour stands, in His immortal life, keeping

forever the marks of His passion; there is our Mediator before the throne of the Almighty. The priest therefore prays that God may send His angel and take the oblation from this earthly altar and place it on the sublime altar in heaven. The altar in heaven is not a material but a mystic altar, on which the blessed, who also are called priests (Apoc. v. 10), present, in union with Christ, their and our High-Priest, the offering of the Church triumphant. We pray that our offering on earth may be united with theirs in heaven. The words of this prayer are so sublime, so wonderful, and at the same time so unconceivable, that we should respect them with humility and holy fear rather than try to penetrate their mysterious meaning.

The priest further says: "That as many of us as shall by partaking at this altar," and at these words he kisses the altar. The Church has a great reverence for the altar, which represents Jesus Christ, the living Altar. The priest proceeds: "That as many of us as shall receive the most sacred body and blood of Thy Son"—at these words he makes the sign of the cross over the host and the chalice, and then crosses himself while he says—"may be filled with all

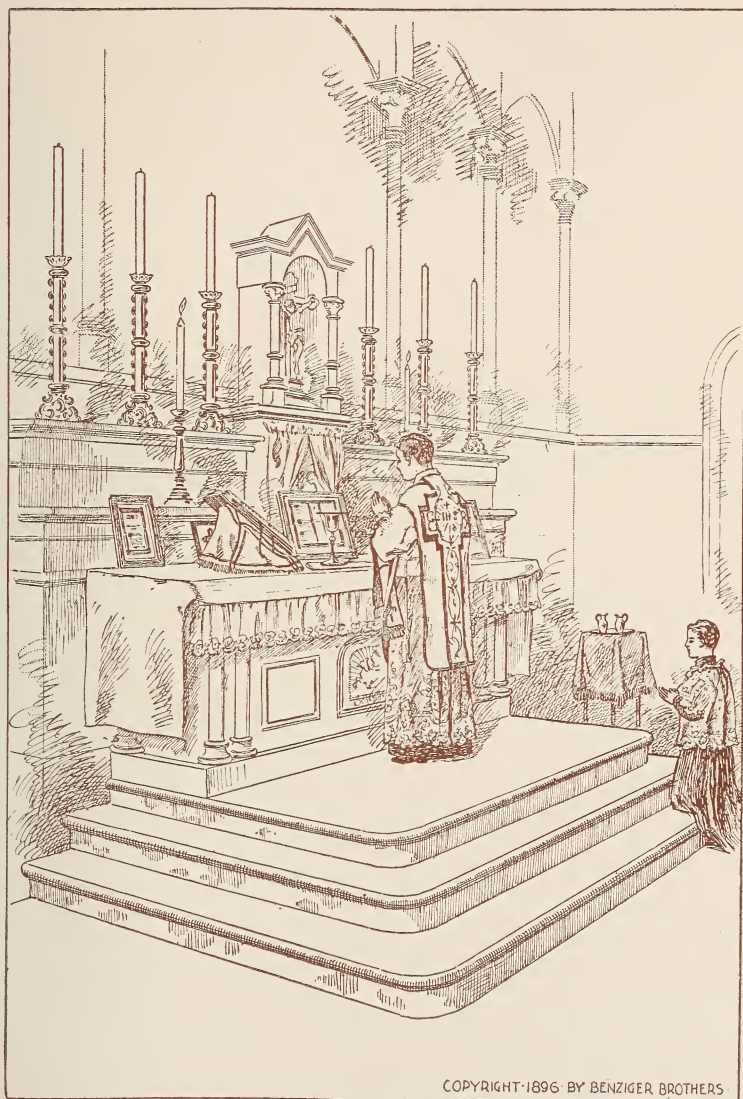
heavenly blessing and grace. Through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen." We pray thereby that we may be as much filled with graces and blessings as if we were admitted already to the participation of that living Altar, Jesus Christ, who is the source Himself of all graces. The priest asks, in virtue of that Altar, all manner of graces for all men, because he does not speak for himself alone. He signs himself with the sign of the cross to demonstrate that those blessings come to us from the passion of Christ, and that we must receive them with desire. Here ends the great prayer of the Canon.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE SECOND AND THE THIRD PRAYER AFTER THE CONSECRATION.

BESIDES the Church militant and the Church triumphant there is still another part of that great mystic body. In the preceding prayers the Church prays for the living, especially those who take part in the holy sacrifice of the Mass; now she (the Church) will pray for the suffering souls in purgatory. God enables us to intercede for them and to help them. The holy sacrifice of the Mass may be offered for that intention; and the Church orders that in every Mass remembrance should be made of her departed members. It is a dogma of our faith that the Mass works to the relief of the souls in purgatory. This doctrine is as old as the Church herself; the Fathers of the second century mention this prayer for the dead. The priest therefore addresses God in behalf of the suffering souls and says: "Remember also, O Lord, Thy ser-

vants and handmaids, [N. and N.], who have gone before us with the sign of faith and sleep the sleep of peace. To these, O Lord, and to all who rest in Christ, grant, we pray Thee, a place of refreshment, of light, and of peace. Through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen." Not without reason is the commemoration of the dead made after the Consecration, whereas the commemoration of the living is made before. The members of the Church militant can, as we have often said, be co-offerers; this we find clearly expressed in the commemoration of the living. The dead, on the contrary, can offer no more; they can only partake of the fruits of the sacrifice which is offered for their relief. When can we then more powerfully intercede for them, if not at the time the Lamb of God is really present on the altar? We have remarked elsewhere that the commemoration of the living is called also "diptych prayer;" what we said there applies also to the commemoration of the dead. After the words "sleep the sleep of peace," the priest joins his hands together, and, fixing his eyes on the Blessed Sacrament, he calls to mind or names explicitly the dead for whom he wishes to implore God's mercy. The choice of these



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AT THE MEMENTO FOR THE DEAD.





names is left to the priest; he is guided therein by his obligations of gratitude and love. As a public minister of the Church, he must abide by her precepts, and only recommend to God persons "who have gone before us with the sign of faith." Formerly no names were allowed on the diptychs of persons who departed this life out of the unity of the Church; this seems to be obligatory even now, because the memento takes the place of the reading of the diptychs. This has been at all times the practice of the Church. St. Cyril of Jerusalem writes as follows: "During holy Mass we pray in general for all those who died *amongst us*, that is, in the bosom of the Church, as members of the Church;" in the commemoration of the living, only the "*Excommunicati vitandi*," that is, those who are under the ban of the Church and are to be avoided; in the commemoration of the dead, all who died outside of the unity of the Church are excluded, such as heretics, schismatics, infidels, and excommunicated persons. For these the Church does not pray explicitly; should they be in purgatory, they come under the general denomination of "those who rest in the Lord." Nothing prevents, however, the priest, not as minister of

the Church, but as a private person, from recommending these souls to God. As a general rule, the priest should not explicitly name persons for whom the Church does not allow the offering of the sacrifice; because to them the restrictions used in this prayer are not applicable. To move the Lord to mercy towards her suffering children, the Church calls them "His servants and handmaids," and adds that they left this world "with the sign of faith." This sign is the spiritual character imprinted in the soul which distinguishes the faithful from the infidels. This character is imprinted in the soul by Baptism and Confirmation, which makes the perfect Christian. Baptism by itself also gives the sign of faith; this is expressed in the prayers which the Church prescribes for a funeral. When the body of the deceased is borne into the church, the priest says: "Enter not into judgment, O Lord, with Thy servant, who, when he lived, was signed with the sign of the Blessed Trinity." This sign of faith is, however, insufficient to move God to mercy, if the faith of the deceased was not a living faith. The supplication of the priest will be of no benefit to one who wilfully takes his own life, or goes into eternity with

a mortal sin on his conscience. The words "and sleep the sleep of peace" show in what light the Church views the death of a Christian. It is a sleep, and therefore she gives the name of *cæmeterium* (resting-place) to what we call graveyard. They died in peace with the Church and with God; even in purgatory they sleep the sleep of peace. In the catacombs of the first Christians there are innumerable documents engraved in stone expressive of their idea of death; for them, as it should be for us, death was the sleep of peace. For the souls whom the priest has recommended to God, and in general for all those who rest in Christ, he asks a "place of refreshment, light, and peace." "In the souls of purgatory," writes St. Catharine of Genoa, "unspeakable joy is combined with unspeakable suffering; one feeling does not suppress the other." Their greatest suffering is to be banished from that abode of refreshment, light, and peace where they will see their God face to face.

What is purgatory? It is a place where the souls need refreshment, because the fire makes itself terribly felt; it is a place wherein no rays of light penetrate to distract them in their sufferings inside that prison of expiation; it is a

place where no lasting peace reigns; it is on the part of the poor souls a continual sighing, a continual tending towards God, whom they cannot reach. Purgatory is quite different from the place where refreshment, light, and peace are enjoyed in their source. When we pray God for the souls of the faithful departed, it is that they may be freed from their prison, or, at least, if the merits of holy Mass are not altogether applied to them, that they may at least obtain alleviation in their sufferings. The priest concludes this prayer with the words: "Through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen." The Missal here orders that the priest bow his head, which is otherwise not done when the name of Jesus does not occur in the conclusion of a prayer.

The inclination of the head must here have a particular meaning. This ceremony seems to call to our mind an occurrence on Calvary. Scripture tells us that "Jesus, bowing down His head, gave up the ghost," and that He then descended into Limbo to console the souls of the patriarchs and free them from their dungeon. The priest bows his head to lay particular stress on his prayer for all those who died in the Lord and are now being purified in the fire of pur-

gatory, that the atonement of the eucharistic Lamb may penetrate into purgatory and may alleviate and abbreviate the sufferings of the poor souls. The commemoration of the dead contains a salutary lesson for us. We are pilgrims on earth and have here no permanent abode. After some time we shall follow those who have preceded us with the sign of faith, and most likely we shall have something to atone for in purgatory. It is quite natural, then, that after we have made the blood of Jesus Christ flow in purgatory we should think of ourselves again, and beg of God to admit us graciously into the heavenly Sion. This is the object of the following prayer: "To us also sinners, Thy servants, hoping in the multitude of Thy mercies, deign to grant some part and fellowship with Thy holy apostles and martyrs; with John, Stephen, Matthias, Barnabas, Ignatius, Alexander, Marcellinus, Peter, Felicitas, Perpetua, Agatha, Lucy, Agnes, Cecilia, Anastasia, and with all Thy saints; into whose company we beseech Thee to admit us, not weighing our merits, but granting mercy. Through Christ Our Lord." The first three words of this prayer, "*Nobis quoque peccatoribus*" ("to us also sinners"),

are pronounced by the priest a little louder than the rest of the Canon, and at the same time he strikes his breast once. He gives thereby expression to his sentiments of sorrow, sentiments which he wishes also to excite in the hearts of those present, for sins which he would have to expiate later in the fire of purgatory. To move God to mercy, he confesses that he and all those who offer with him the holy sacrifice are sinners, but such as have not lost confidence in the infinite mercy of God. Confiding in God's goodness, the priest asks of Him some part and fellowship with His apostles and martyrs. "God is my portion forever," says the Prophet David (Ps. lxxii. 26); this is also what the priest prays for, namely, the possession of the Supreme Good, in union with the blessed inhabitants of the heavenly Jerusalem.

The Church makes the commemoration of some saints before Consecration, and of others after Consecration. Before Consecration we ask God that they may be our mediators, that we may obtain the graces which we hope from the sacrifice; after Consecration we pray God that we may be admitted to the fellowship of the saints in heaven. Fifteen are here expressly named, and all of them



are martyrs. The first place is assigned to St. John the Baptist. St. John was the precursor of the Messiah, who was to prepare the way for Him. He was to preach penance and prepare the hearts of the Israelites to receive and acknowledge the Messiah, whose coming also he was to announce. It is well known how St. John fulfilled his ministry. He desired to make the true Messiah known to all, and desisted not from admonishing the people and bringing them back to the right path. When duty demanded he was no more afraid of the wealthiest princes than of the poorest beggar. Herod had to hear from him hard truths concerning his scandalous life with Herodias. Instead of gratefully accepting the warning, Herod gives an illustration of the consequences of unbridled passion: he had the precursor beheaded. The Church celebrates the feast of the beheading of St. John on the twenty-ninth of August.

St. Stephen had the honor of being the first, after the death of the Redeemer, to shed his blood for Him. Ordained deacon by the apostles, he devoted himself to the care of the poor and the sick, and also preached the teaching of Christ to the obstinate Jews. He was a man,



as Scripture testifies, "full of grace and fortitude, full of faith, and of the Holy Ghost, and he worked many wonders among the people." As a reward of his untiring zeal, he received the crown of the martyrs. When being stoned to death, his last words were a prayer of pardon for his executioners; he begged of God not to hold them responsible for that sin. The twenty-sixth of December is consecrated to his memory.

St. Matthias was, after the Ascension of Christ, by a special disposition of God called to the apostolate, in place of Judas Iscariot. Later on he preached the Gospel in Ethiopia, and at the end of his apostolic career was beheaded with an axe. His head reposes in Rome in the church of St. Mary Major. His feast is kept on the twenty-fourth of February; in leap years on the twenty-fifth of the same month.

St. Barnabas was born on the island of Cyprus, and was at first called Joseph; the apostles gave him the name of Barnabas. Barnabas is considered by many as a helper of the apostles, but it seems more probable that he was, like Paul, an apostle in the proper sense of the word. It appears that he was also one of the seventy-two disciples. Having received episcopal consecra-

tion at Antioch, he undertook a long mission voyage, together with Paul. Later he separated from the Apostle of the Gentiles, and his native country became his principal field, where he closed a glorious life by the death of a martyr. In the fifth century his holy relics were discovered under a tree; he still had on his breast the Gospel of St. Matthew, which he had copied with his own hand.

St. Ignatius was a companion of the apostles and became afterwards the second successor of St. Peter in the Chair of Antioch. According to a pious legend, he was one of the children whom Our Saviour blessed. During the reign of the Emperor Trajan he was sentenced to death, dragged to Rome, and there thrown before the wild beasts in the Coliseum on the twentieth of December, 107. He said "that, should the wild beasts spare him as they had spared other martyrs, he would excite them himself." "I am the wheat of Christ," said he; "I must be ground by the teeth of lions to be a pure bread before Him."

St. Alexander was the fifth or sixth successor of St. Peter in the Papal chair at Rome. A special mention was due to him in the Canon of

the Mass, since it was by his order that the words immediately preceding the Consecration, "Who the day before He suffered," were inserted in the Canon. He worked numerous and remarkable conversions in Rome. On the third of May, 117, he was beheaded with two of his priests outside of Rome.

St. Marcellinus was a priest of the Church at Rome, and St. Peter was an exorcist. These two saints are in the ecclesiastical liturgy never separated from each other. Marcellinus baptized the daughter of the jailer, from whom Peter had first cast out a devil, together with her family and neighbors, who had witnessed the wonder. This enkindled the rage of the heathens, who beheaded Marcellinus and Peter on the same day. Their feast occurs on the second of June.

Felicitas and Perpetua were two heroines who were martyred at Carthage in Africa in 202. Both were descendants of noble families. After undergoing a frightful scourging, they were thrown before a wild cow and finally beheaded. Guéranger and others assert that this St. Felicitas of whom mention is made in the Canon of the Mass was the glorious woman of Rome, the mother of the seven martyr sons; this holy

woman renewed during the persecution of Marcus Aurelius the generous sacrifice of the mother of the Machabees. If, as others assert, she was the one of Carthage, she would probably be mentioned after St. Perpetua, who was the most remarkable of all those who died with Felicitas, and who even described a part of their martyrdom. It cannot be denied, however, that the first opinion is the most generally received.

Two cities of Sicily, Palermo and Catanea, claim the honor of being the birthplace of St. Agatha. It is certain that she was put to death at Catanea in 251 under the Emperor Decius. She was born of a noble family, and was renowned for her beauty and virtue. From a very early age she had selected Jesus Christ for her Bridegroom. The governor of Sicily did all in his power to make her change that resolution, but in vain. They made her suffer excruciating torments; the tyrant even had her breasts cut away. In prison, she was miraculously cured by St. Peter. While praying fervently, her beautiful soul sped away to heaven.

St. Lucy received the crown of martyrdom about fifty years after St. Agatha, during the terrible persecution of Diocletian. Born at

Syracuse, of wealthy parents, she, after having obtained the restoration of her mother's health at the tomb of St. Agatha, distributed all her dowry to the poor; she had previously made the vow of perpetual chastity to God. The young man to whom her parents had betrothed her denounced her to the pagan judges. Lucy made a splendid confession of the Christian faith in the presence of these judges. They told her: "Words will cease when we come to strokes;" but they were mistaken, for the Holy Ghost inspired her to speak. Finally the judge ordered pitch, resin, and boiling oil to be poured over her and then to be lighted; but the fire did not touch her. He then ordered her throat to be pierced with a sword. In consequence of this wound St. Lucy died on the thirteenth of December.

St. Agnes was born in Rome; her physical beauty was enhanced by a still greater beauty of soul. She received the double crown of martyrdom and virginity at the tender age of thirteen years. Her biographers, among whom is St. Ambrose, say "that she was a child in years, but ripe in understanding; tender in body, but courageous in mind; beautiful in appearance, but more beautiful in soul." A prominent citizen

wanted her in marriage, but she had consecrated her virginity to God and had resolved to remain a virgin. All possible threats could not shake that resolution. Finally she fell under the sword of the tyrant. On the very spot where she gained that brilliant victory was erected a splendid church in honor of the youthful saint.

St. Cecilia was a noble Roman virgin, who had made at a very early age the vow of virginal chastity. She only acceded to the wishes of her parents to marry a wealthy heathen young man, named Valerian, after she had been assured by God that she could remain faithful to her promise to death. She had the consolation of converting her husband and his brother to the true faith; both of them receiving afterwards the crown of martyrdom. All this was brought to the notice of the pagan prefect of the city, Almachius. This murderous tyrant endeavored to kill her by suffocation, in the bathroom of her palace. But God, who did not desert the three young men in the furnace, protected His handmaid. The tyrant then ordered her to be beheaded. The executioner made three frightful cuts, without however severing the head. Cecilia survived three days, and in the mean time



made arrangements to have her house transformed into a church. In 821 her sacred body was miraculously discovered by Pope Paschal I. St. Cecilia is honored as the special patroness of Church music.

St. Anastasia was a noble widow of Rome. During her married life she had much to suffer from her pagan husband. After his death she devoted herself entirely to works of charity and mercy. During the persecution of Diocletian, on the twenty-fifth of December, 304, she received by fire the crown of martyrdom. She was held in such high veneration in Rome that the Pope formerly celebrated invariably the second Christmas Mass in the church consecrated in her honor. This is not done at present, but the commemoration of the saint is always made in that Mass.

The question may be put why so many and no more, these and no other, saints are mentioned in the Canon. Different reasons may be given for that; we hold, however, with Suarez, that it is needless to investigate the reasons of such ordinances, as they are often made either accidentally or in consequence of a particular devotion.



We ask in this prayer that we may be eternally united in heaven with these and all the other saints. The fellowship for which we pray consists in this, that we may be partakers of their happiness. St. Thomas Aquinas beautifully explains this as follows: he says, "eternal life consists in the joyful company of all the blessed; this company will be very acceptable, because every one will possess all good with all the saints; they will love one another as themselves; hence every one rejoices over the happiness of others as well as over his own. Therefore the joy of all is the joy of every one." In order to obtain that happiness we appeal not to our good deeds, or our merits, but to the mercy of the Lord. The priest concludes this prayer, as usual, "through Christ Our Lord. Amen."

## CHAPTER XXII.

### CONCLUSION OF THE CANON, THE PATER NOSTER, AND THE LIBERA.

THE Canon is now concluded with the following impressive words: "Through whom, O Lord, Thou dost always create, sanctify, vivify, bless, and give unto us all these good things. By Him, and with Him, and in Him is to Thee, God, almighty Father, in unity of the Holy Ghost, all honor and glory, world without end. Amen."

Before proceeding with the exposition of this prayer we must first mention a ceremony formerly in use. The faithful then brought to the altar bread, wine, vegetables, fruit, etc., and the words now used to conclude the Canon served then to bless all these good things. While pronouncing these words the priest, in the presence of Our Saviour Himself and in the sublimest exercise of his ministry, blessed all that had been brought to the altar. This differ-



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AT THE PATER NOSTER.



ence of usage in the primitive and in the modern Church explains also the motive of this ceremony in former days and its omission at present. Formerly there was only one altar in the church, and arranged, as far as possible, like the heavenly altar, which St. John describes in the Apocalypse: "Before the throne of the eternal Father was the altar, around the altar were the Seniors, on the altar the Lamb."

Formerly only one Mass was offered in the church and then not every day. The bishop celebrated the Mass; the priests united and offered with him. The faithful then presented to the bishop to be blessed the fruits of the earth, all that was needed for their support. Later on, about the eighth century, at the inspiration of the Holy Ghost and to satisfy the devotion of priests and faithful, the practice was introduced of saying more Masses in the same church. But as the number of Masses increased, the custom of bringing fruits and vegetables to be blessed was discontinued. A vestige is left of that general custom of former days on Holy Thursday, when the bishop consecrates the oil of the sick, before pronouncing in Mass the words which we are to explain. "However it may be in regard

to that ancient custom," says Pope Benedict XIV., "it is certain that the blessing of new fruits could not take place at every Mass, and yet that the words under consideration were said at every Mass; thence it follows that these words must be understood of the oblation without regard to that existing custom." The words: "All these good things" have reference to the eucharistic elements of bread and wine, which were substantially on the altar before consecration, and which the priest still has in view, because these outward appearances conceal the sacrificed Lamb from our eyes after consecration. These natural elements of bread and wine were created, and then by the consecration changed from earthly into heavenly gifts, and given unto us in holy communion for the nourishment of our souls. By "all these good things" are partly meant the natural good things of bread and wine, and the supernatural good things—the body and blood of Christ; the first are created, sanctified, vivified, and blessed; the others are given unto us in holy communion. As in the beginning of the world, so does God now continue to create through His Son, Jesus Christ, as St. John expresses it in his Gospel and as we

profess it in the Apostles' Creed. He not only created these in the beginning of the world, the natural products which form the material elements of the sacrifice, but He continues to create them in a certain sense by causing new grains and new grapes to be produced every year. The Almighty changes those natural products through Jesus Christ into the oblation of holy Mass. This wonderful change of substance is here proposed to us under three different aspects, as being the most perfect and most sublime, namely, sanctification, vivification, and blessing.

By the consecration bread and wine are *sanctified*, because their substance ceases to exist, to make room for the most holy body and blood of Christ united with the divinity. By the consecration the lifeless elements of bread and wine are *vivified*, that is, changed into the living and life-giving body and blood of Christ. Finally, by consecration the bread and wine are *blessed* in the fullest sense of the word, not merely like oil, water, etc., which receive thereby a religious destination, but because the substances of bread and wine are changed into the blessed sacrificial body and blood of Christ, containing all heavenly blessings. These sancti-



fied, vivified, and blessed gifts God gives to us through Jesus Christ, as sacrifice and sacrament; because the Holy Eucharist is not only a sacrifice, it is also a sacrament for the nourishment of our souls. The prayer which we are explaining consists properly of two parts. In the first we acknowledge that God grants us the sacrificial gifts through Jesus Christ; in the second we profess that by the offering of Christ the greatest possible honor is tendered to the triune God. These few words explain to us the efficacy of holy Mass. Jesus Christ, the High-Priest of the New Testament, appears on the altar as Mediator between God and man, on the one hand, to bless and enrich humanity with the fulness of His gifts, and, on the other, to honor and glorify God in the most perfect manner. In the second part we profess that *by* Christ God is honored and glorified, because the God-Man offers Himself to the eternal Father, and because by Him the homage of creatures is tendered to God. God is further honored and glorified *with* Christ, because Christ also is true God, who together and in like manner with the Father and the Holy Ghost must be honored and glorified. Finally, God is glorified *in* Jesus

Christ, because the divine Persons have the same nature, and consequently the honor which is rendered to one of the Three Divine Persons cannot be separated from the honor which is due to the other two. We may also add that by Christ, with Christ, and in Christ we give to God the greatest possible offering which is in the power of a creature to give. As members of Christ and mystically united with the Head, we offer *by* Him and *with* Him, because He deigns to make us His co-offerers; we offer also *in* Him, because we are offered in a spiritual manner with Him.

Touching as are these words, the actions which accompany them are equally touching. While the priest says, "Sanctifies, vivifies, blesses," he makes three crosses over the oblation; not to bless anew what is already infinitely holy, but to signify the completed sanctification, vivification, and blessing. Then he uncovers the chalice and makes five other crosses, not with the hand only, but with the sacred Host; three crosses over the chalice, and two between the chalice and himself. In this prayer the Three Divine Persons are named distinctly, the Son thrice, the Father and the Holy Ghost each once. The first three crosses refer to the Son, and they are made with

the host over the chalice to signify that it contains the sacred blood of Christ. Afterwards at the separate mention of the Father and the Holy Ghost the priest makes two crosses between the chalice and himself, because, as neither the Father nor the Son are sacrificed, it is not proper that at their names the host be placed over the precious blood, which belongs to the Son alone, for He alone assumed human nature and sacrificed Himself for us. At the words, "all honor and glory," the priest, holding the Host over the chalice, raises both a little. This elevation is a figure of the glorification which every day ascends as a sweet odor from the altar to the throne of the Almighty. The immolation of Christ on Calvary was on the part of men the most heinous crime; on the altar that offering means the greatest glory to God, because the One who is offered lives and dies no more.

There is nothing which gives greater glory to God than the sacrifice of holy Mass. We may say a prayer in His honor or practise an act of virtue, but this does not force God's attention; but in the Mass His infinite perfections oblige Him to look down graciously on the homage we pay Him through His Son, because Jesus Christ

is always the Priest and the Victim. Jesus Christ is a Priest forever; even after the world shall have ceased to exist He will continue in His capacity of Priest to glorify God, because God must be eternally glorified. The propitiatory and impetratory sacrifice will not exist in heaven; Jesus, the Priest forever, will, however, continue to praise and thank God. This is expressed by the concluding words of the prayer, "Forever and ever," which the priest again says in a loud voice, and to which the acolyte in the name of the people replies "Amen," to express that the congregation unites with all the priest has done in the Canon, and especially with the oblation which has been presented to God.

The priest now begins the Lord's Prayer, preceded by a short introduction, to excite the attention of the faithful. The Lord's Prayer was a part of Mass from the very first ages of Christianity; according to St. Jerome, Our Saviour Himself willed and determined that it should be a part of the Mass. It is in the very oldest missals. As the Preface is an introduction to the Canon, so is the Lord's Prayer an introduction to the third part of Mass, the Communion. As the contents of that prayer are applicable partly to the Offer-

tory, partly to the Communion, it forms a beautiful transition from the one to the other. In the Lord's Prayer we ask the sanctification of God's name, the advent of His kingdom, and the fulfilling of His divine will; then we pray for our daily bread, the remission of our trespasses, freedom from temptation, and deliverance from evil. The first three requests regard the glorification of God, the three last the salvation of man; they are joined together by the fourth, by which we ask God for heavenly food of the soul and temporal bread of the body. We may confidently hope for and actually receive these blessings principally through the Holy Eucharist, considered as sacrifice and as sacrament. By the Offertory the greatest possible glory is given to God; in holy communion we receive the Source of graces, from which we may draw to our hearts happiness for time and eternity.

The priest says: "Let us pray. Instructed by Thy saving precepts, following Thy divine institution, we presume to say: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those

who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation." The acolyte in the name of the congregation says the last part: "But deliver us from evil." The priest then says in a subdued tone of voice, "Amen." Many times before has the priest by the words, "Let us pray," excited the attention of the faithful. Never before was there more appropriate occasion to induce the faithful to pray with attention and confidence, because he has now before him the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Priest and faithful present to God the requests that follow, because they are in compliance with the divine precept which Jesus Christ has left us. Instructed by Christ Himself we presume to say: "Our Father." We could explain at length each part of that short but sublime prayer, but we prefer translating the beautiful paraphrase of St. Francis: "*Our most holy Father, our Creator, Redeemer, Saviour, and Consoler, who art in heaven* in the angels, in the saints, enlightening them to Thy knowledge, whereas Thou, O Lord, art light, inflaming them with Thy divine love; because Thou, O Lord, art love, dwelling in them and filling them with Thy happiness; because Thou, O Lord, art the Sovereign and Eternal



Good, from whom all good comes, and without whom nothing is good. *Hallowed be Thy name.* May our knowledge of Thee be clearer, that we may understand the breadth of Thy favors, the length of Thy promises, the heights of Thy majesty, and the depth of Thy judgments. *Thy kingdom come*, that Thou mayst reign in us by Thy grace and admit us into Thy kingdom, where we shall see Thee face to face, love Thee perfectly, be happy in Thy company, and enjoy Thee forever. *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*, that we may love Thee from our whole heart, by thinking always of Thee, desiring Thee with all our soul, directing all our intentions and all our mind to Thee, seeking Thy honor in all things, employing all our faculties and sentiments of body and soul as an homage of love, and for no other purpose; that we may love our neighbor as ourselves, by trying to bring all, according to our means, to Thy love; rejoicing in the good of others, as in our own; compassionating with them in their tribulations and not offending any. *Give us this day our daily bread.* Give us this day Thy beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, in our memory, in our understanding, and in the respectful remembrance of the



love which He bore us, and of all He has done, said, and suffered for us. *And forgive us our trespasses*, by Thy mercy and the unspeakable merits of the passion of Thy beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the merits and intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and all Thy elect. *As we forgive those that trespass against us*, and because we do not fully forgive; grant, O Lord, that we may fully forgive, that we may love our enemies for Thee, and piously intercede for them with Thee; that we never return evil for evil, and try to be useful to all in Thee. *And lead us not into temptation*, be it internal or external, transitory or continual. *But deliver us from evil*, of all past, present, and future evil. *Amen* with all our heart."

After the Lord's Prayer begins a part of holy Mass which extends to the second prayer before the Communion. Communion is the means chosen by the Saviour to unite men among themselves and to make one body of them. When the Church excludes one for a grievous sin from her unity, she *excommunicates* him, that is, she excludes him from the communion of the faithful. To signify and express that unity, the Church

wills that peace, which is the sequel of true love among the faithful, be the object of special attention. That is why she asks for peace in the following prayer, which at the same time amplifies the last request of the Lord's Prayer.

The priest says: "Deliver us, we beseech Thee, O Lord, from all evils, past, present, and future, and by the intercession of the blessed and ever glorious Virgin Mary, Mother of God, together with Thy blessed apostles Peter and Paul, and Andrew and all the saints, graciously give peace in our days, that aided by the help of Thy mercy we may be always free from sin and secure from all disturbance."

The first words of this prayer are an amplification of the last petition in the Lord's Prayer. Why does the Church insist so much on the prayer for deliverance from all evil? Because this world of ours, where the children of Eve are banished, is strewn with thistles and thorns, and is a real valley of tears. Our life on earth is filled with a thousand trials, dangers await us on all sides, enemies assail us within and without. Although we are called, even on earth,

children of God, we know not what awaits us on the other side of the grave. This exalted dignity is environed on earth with many a dark cloud. As long as we must fight upon earth, our chief weapon is prayer; we must pray to be delivered from all past, present, and future evils. The past evils are sins which continue in their evil consequences; those sins have left us perhaps many temporal punishments, perhaps a spiritual languor, which we must try to expiate or make disappear. For the present we are threatened with many evils from within and without; left to ourselves it would be impossible to resist all those enemies. The future is in no ways safer than the present; there are so many tribulations to which we are subjected, so many sins which we may commit. Justly therefore we pray God, the Giver of all good, to be delivered from all those evils. The Lord often permits severe trials, that we may take our refuge in Him, with all the more confidence. No moment could be more propitious to give to our prayers the necessary qualities than this. With Jesus, the sacrificial Lamb, before us, with Him who unites our prayers to His, we may with confidence beg God not to punish us as our demerits deserve, but graciously to grant

peace in our days. We ask of God first the true and interior peace of the soul, which consists in this, that through His divine mercy we may ever be free from sin, in order to live in continual friendship with Him; further, we ask outward peace, which is that in the midst of all tribulations and persecutions, assisted by God's grace, we may ever be in safety, for, left to ourselves, these trials would cause us to deviate from the true path. We pray for true interior peace and outward peace in *our* days; all those who will come after us will do the same to the end of time.

In order to make his prayer more powerful, the priest implores the intercession of the ever blessed and glorious Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, and of the holy apostles Peter and Paul and Andrew, and of all the saints. St. Andrew is mentioned here particularly, probably for the reason that the Roman Church always entertained a special devotion towards the brother of the Prince of the apostles. About the middle of the prayer, when the priest says, "and all the saints," he crosses himself with the paten, which he has held in his right hand from the beginning of the prayer; then he kisses the paten as a token of respect, because the body of the Lord

will now rest upon it. The priest signs himself with the paten, thereby expressing his desire to participate in that peace which Christ obtained for us by His cross and confirmed by the institution of the Blessed Sacrament.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### FROM THE BREAKING OF THE HOST TO THE COMMUNION.

THE breaking of the host stands in close connection with the concluding words of the preceding prayer: "Through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Our Lord, who with Thee lives and reigns in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God forever and ever. Amen." While the priest says, "Through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Our Lord," he holds respectfully the host over the chalice, breaks it into two parts, and places the one he has in his right hand on the paten. He then continues: "Who with Thee lives and reigns," and breaks a particle of the one he holds in his left hand; this particle he holds in his right hand, while he places the part in his left hand beside the other half on the paten, meanwhile saying: "In the unity of the Holy Ghost, God." Then, holding this particle in his right hand, he solemnly intones or says in a loud





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AT THE DOMINE NON SUM DIGNUS.





voice, "Forever and ever," to which the acolyte replies, "Amen." The priest then sings or says, "The peace of the Lord be ever with you," while he makes with the particle of the host three crosses over the chalice. After the server has responded to the greeting of the priest with the words: "And with thy spirit," the priest drops the particle into the chalice, accompanying that action with the following words in a low tone of voice: "May this commingling and consecration of the body and blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ become to us, who receive it, effectual unto eternal life. Amen." The custom of breaking the host is as old as the sacrifice itself. Holy Scripture expressly mentions "that the Lord at the Last Supper broke the bread;" shortly after His resurrection, the two disciples of Emmaus recognized Him at the breaking of the bread. The apostles continued the practice which Our Lord had inaugurated, and the Church has always observed this apostolic tradition. The breaking of the host and the commingling of the elements, simple as they may appear, contain a great mystic meaning.

That the breaking of the host is of great importance is explained to us by the words which

the bishop addresses to the levite at his ordination to the priesthood. After the ordination the bishop warns the newly ordained to learn well the manner of saying Mass, such as the Consecration, the breaking of the host, and the Communion, before offering the holy sacrifice. If the breaking of the host is classed with the Consecration and the Communion, the breaking of the host must then form a very important part of Mass. In fact, while it does not concern the substance of the sacrifice, it stands in close connection both with the Consecration and the Communion. In the first ages of Christianity, these two principal parts of Mass were almost invariably called "the breaking of the bread." The host is broken to place before us in a clearer light the substance of the sacrifice. The breaking of the host reminds us of the painful and bloody holocaust of the cross; it is a figure of the inhuman tortures which caused the death of Christ. The breaking of the host puts us in mind that Christ is the Lamb who deigned to be wounded for our iniquities and bruised for our sins (Is. liii. 5). The breaking of the host expresses in a different way what is expressed by the separate consecration of the species. The

host is broken over the chalice. It may be that this is done out of respect, so that any falling particles at the breaking of the host may drop into the chalice; but this does not change the fact that this ceremony was introduced to express another mystic and very important meaning. St. Germanus thinks this ceremony signifies that the blood contained in the chalice flowed from the broken, the wounded, and the bruised body of Christ, in such a way that it belongs to it and constitutes with it but one offering. The breaking of the host is also a preparation and introduction to the Communion; breaking the bread is the same as preparing it for communion. "The breaking of the body," says St. John Chrysostom, "is done by communion;" on the cross this was not done, because it is written: "No bone shall be broken in Him." "What Christ did not suffer on the cross," so continues the holy doctor, "He suffers at holy Mass, when He allows Himself to be broken, to feed all." Therefore the breaking of the host indicates also that the sacrificed body of Christ is given to us in holy communion for the nourishment of our souls. The Saviour Himself has said: "The bread that I will give is My flesh for the life of

the world" (John vi. 52). He offered Himself once to His heavenly Father by a bloody death on the cross; every day He offers Himself to Him by a mystic death on the altar; by that double offering, signified by the breaking of the host, He becomes a spiritual food, taken in holy communion. Formerly the altar-bread was much larger than it is now; one of the three parts was then subdivided into many smaller particles, which were distributed to those present, or sent to the absent, or dropped into the chalice at a following Mass. The participation of the same offering is a striking sign and pledge of ecclesiastical communion. To preserve mutual charity, Pope and bishops formerly sent particles of a consecrated host to other bishops and priests; these were then taken at a following Mass together with the precious blood. This practice prevailed in Rome until about the ninth century. Often it happened that on Sundays or feast-days the Pope sent one of his priests to say Mass in another church of the city; to this priest the Pope would give a particle of the host which he had consecrated; this would then be dropped into the chalice and be taken by the priest as a sign of communion with the visible

head of the Church. The breaking of the host into three parts mystically represents the Blessed Trinity, or the earthly life, the sacrificial death, and the eternal glorification of Christ; it would appear to represent more especially the mystic body of Christ, that is, the militant, suffering, and triumphant Church. From what we have said about the breaking of the Host must also be understood the meaning of the mingling of the appearances. In the separate consecration of bread and wine, as also in the breaking of the host, the body and blood of Christ are represented to us as separated from each other; by the subsequent mingling of the consecrated elements they are again united, and thereby we are reminded that on the altar is indeed, not the blood without the body, nor the body without the blood, but Christ whole and entire under both appearances, with body and blood, divinity and humanity. As the separation of body and blood is represented by the separate consecration and by the breaking of the host, so by the union of these elements the glorious Resurrection of Christ is represented. As such, the mingling of the elements also refers to the communion, as in holy communion there is given to us, not the

dead body of Christ, but His glorious risen body.

After the breaking of the host and before the mingling of the two appearances, the priest makes with the particle of the host which he holds in his right hand three crosses over the chalice, saying at the same time: "May the peace of the Lord be ever with you." We said that this is done after the breaking and before the mingling; this circumstance should be well taken into consideration, because it reminds us that Christ by His death on the cross and by His glorious Resurrection became the source of true peace. The crosses over the chalice, which contains the blood of Christ, signify that peace was made through the cross and the blood shed on it, because, says St. Paul, "It hath well pleased the Father, through Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, making peace through the blood of His cross, on earth and in heaven (Col. i. 20). The priest prays that the peace which Christ brought upon earth may be shared by all present, and by the Church in general, forever. The acolyte in the name of the faithful replies: "And with thy spirit." The prayer which the priest says at the mingling of the elements



presents certain difficulties, especially as regards the word *consecration*. The words *mingling* and *consecration* are understood generally in the concrete sense, so as to mean: This mingled and consecrated body and blood of Christ become unto us eternal life. This mingling and consecration are made for our salvation, not because the act of mingling and consecrating sanctifies us, but because these mingled and consecrated elements greatly confer to our salvation when we receive them worthily; this is the explanation of Cardinal Bellarmin. The concluding words seem to confirm that meaning.

The word *consecration* in this prayer, however, must have a deeper meaning. "Possibly," says Cardinal Bellarmin, "is there question here of the new consecration, which is the consequence of the mingling of the elements." This new consecration means nothing else but a new sacramental meaning. We say that something is consecrated, when it acquires a sacramental meaning; in the same way, we may say that something is consecrated again, when it obtains another sacramental signification. By the mingling the Resurrection of Christ is represented, because in His resurrection the flesh was again

united to the blood. Therefore by the mingling occurs a new consecration, while the divided elements represent the death of Christ and united His resurrection. The breaking of the host and the mingling of the appearances clearly express how the divine Lamb died for us, and rose again, to be at the divine banquet for us the Source of eternal salvation.

The Council of Trent (sess. xiii. cap. 8) calls the Holy Eucharist "the sign of unity, the bond of love, the figure of union;" it is indeed the Sacrament of Peace. Peace is one of the chief effects of communion, and is at the same time the principal requisite to participate in the fruits thereof. At the table of the Lord the bond of love among the faithful must be made firmer.

After the Pater Noster the priest prays that God might "graciously give peace in our days;" after the breaking of the host he addresses to the faithful the wish: "The peace of the Lord be ever with you"; he proceeds now to pray with more emphasis for peace in the *Agnus Dei* and in the prayer immediately following. Having then covered the chalice with the pall, bowing down before the altar, he says: "Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world,

have mercy on us. Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us. Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, grant us Thy peace. Lord Jesus Christ, who saidst to Thy apostles, Peace I leave you, My peace I give you; regard not my sins, but the faith of Thy Church, and be pleased to keep her according to Thy will in peace and unity. Who livest and reignest God, forever and ever. Amen."

The priest repeats three times the *Agnus Dei*, twice with the prayer "have mercy on us," and the third time he adds: "Grant us peace." Originally "have mercy on us" was repeated thrice; but later on, the Church, assailed by all sorts of trials and tribulations, as Innocent III. observes, deemed advisable to pray during Mass, "Grant us peace," that her request might be the more surely granted. To express the feelings of his sinfulness and the contrition of his heart, the priest strikes his breast three times while saying "Have mercy on us" and "Grant us peace;" the contrition of heart is the best disposition to the acquisition of true peace. In Masses for the dead, the words "Have mercy on us" and "Grant us peace" are replaced by

“Grant them rest” and “Grant them everlasting rest;” at these words the priest does not strike his breast, to indicate that in those Masses, offered especially for them, he thinks more of them than of himself.

Christ is called here the Lamb of God. In the Old Law the lamb was one of the ordinary victims offered; it was a figure of Jesus Christ, the only true Lamb, “who taketh away the sins of the world,” who satisfied for sin by dying for sinners. The lamb is the figure of innocence, of meekness, of submission, and of willing sacrifice, while it lets itself be led to slaughter without resistance. All these qualities apply to Jesus, considered as the Supreme Sacrifice. Christ is the “Lamb of God,” not only because He is the sacrifice for the salvation of the world, according to His Father’s will and for His honor, but also because He is God’s beloved Son, in whom the fulness of the divinity dwells. He takes away the sins of the world, because He is the Son of God, because God is well pleased with Him. As in Holy Writ the lamb is generally a figure of the Redeemer, and the blessed in heaven sing the praises of the Lamb without ceasing, so also does the Church delight in

representing the Saviour to us as the Lamb of God. Whenever the priest gives holy communion to the faithful, he introduces to them Jesus Christ with the words of St. John the Baptist: "Behold the Lamb of God! Behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world!" The Church always concludes her litanies with a threefold invocation to the Lamb of God. In Masses for the dead to the *Agnus Dei* is added twice "grant them rest" and the third time "grant them everlasting rest," the rest, namely, which can be enjoyed only in the eternal fatherland. The prayer that follows the *Agnus Dei* is called the prayer for peace. In this and the two following prayers the priest addresses directly the Son, really present under the sacramental species. Humbly inclined and with eyes fixed on the holy host, he continues to pray for that precious peace, not for himself alone, but for the whole Church. Not without reason does the Church insist so much on peace. "So great a boon is peace," says St. Augustine, "that even in earthly and perishable goods there is nothing sweeter, nothing more desirable, nothing better than peace." The peace of Christ brings with it friendship with God, tranquillity of mind, calm-

ness in temptations and persecutions, and reciprocal harmony among men. Interior peace of the soul with God and with herself and exterior peace with his neighbor, in a word, the peace of God, is a blessing which surpasseth all understanding. The peace which Christ left to His disciples is a peace which the world can neither give nor take away. Christ has obtained true peace for us by His death; we rely on God's infallible word when asking His peace for the Church militant. Prayer, however, to be efficacious must be humble; therefore the priest prays that God may not regard his unworthiness, his sins, but may take into consideration only the faith of his spotless bride, in order that she, as He desires, may perfect her course in this world in union and peace. At a Solemn High Mass a ceremony here takes place concerning which we must add a few words. While the priest says the prayer for peace, the deacon kneels at the right of the priest; after the prayer is ended, the deacon rises, both kiss the altar, and the priest gives to the deacon the kiss of peace; the deacon gives it to the subdeacon, and the subdeacon to the other clergy in the sanctuary. The kiss of peace is the figure of union and love.



Often in a Solemn Mass the ministers of the altar kiss the hand of the celebrant, as a token of respect. The hand is the figure of power; the anointed hand of the priest who touches and distributes the Most Holy is entitled to that token of respect. According to the Roman ceremonial, the *Pax*, or kiss of peace, is given before the communion; the introduction of this disposition seems to date from the days of Pope Innocent I. Formerly, however, the kiss of peace was not given as it is now. They made use then of a little piece of wood or other material, on which the image of Christ or of a saint was painted or engraved, and which was presented to the veneration of all present; it was called *Osculatorium*. Later on this practice ceased, and the giving of the kiss of peace was limited to the assistant clergy. In Solemn Masses for the dead the kiss of peace is omitted, because, observed St. Thomas, the sacrifice is then offered, not for present peace, but for the eternal rest of the deceased. On Holy Thursday the kiss of peace is also omitted, to express the grief and sorrow of the Church at the treacherous kiss of Judas. The kiss of peace is further omitted on Good Friday and Holy Saturday, because Christ, who



is our true peace, did not promulgate peace until the day of His resurrection, when He said to His apostles: "Peace be to you."

Priest and deacon kiss the altar to greet Christ and His saints with love and veneration, and thereby to confirm the mystical union existing between the Church militant on earth and the Church triumphant in heaven. The immaculate bride of Christ upon earth wishes as far as possible to imitate the life of the saints in heaven; often have we remarked that she follows what the Holy Scriptures have revealed to us of the heavenly Jerusalem. If the first Christians had, as Scripture testifies, but one heart and one soul, it is easy to understand how much stronger the bonds of mutual love must be among the saints in heaven. The union among the faithful, signified by the kiss of peace, and for which the Church prays so fervently, must be as perfect a copy as possible of that heavenly union. The kiss of peace is a beautiful preparation for the actual or spiritual reception of holy communion, the sacrament of love and union.

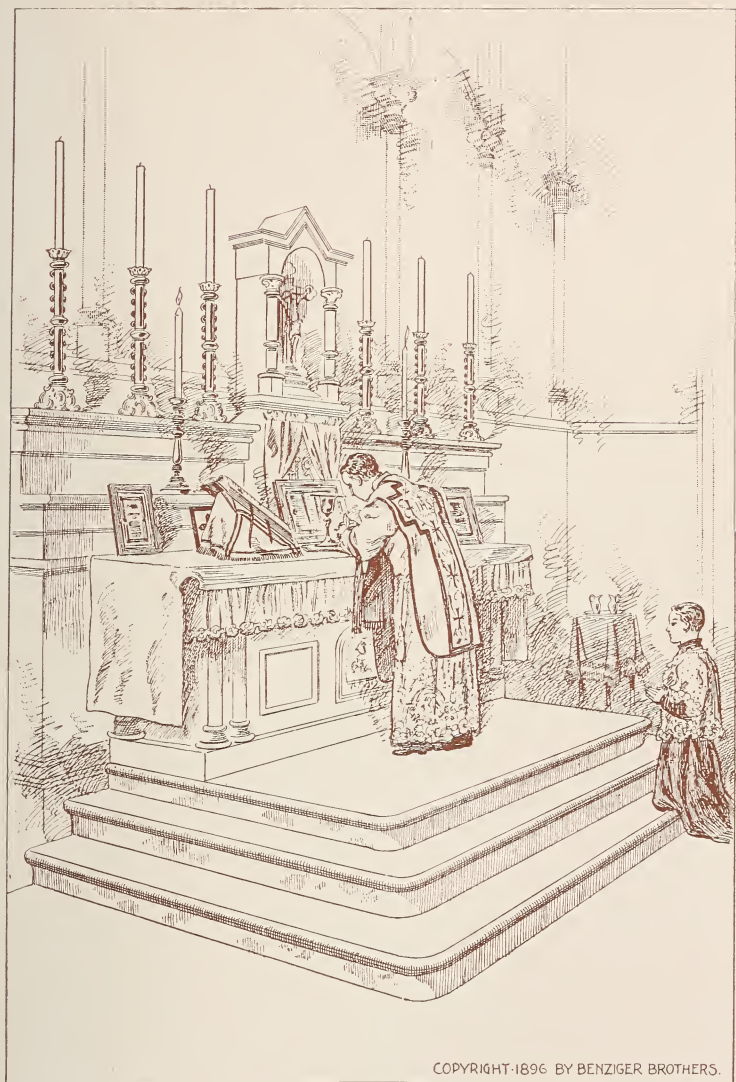
## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE COMMUNION.

THE moment is now at hand when the priest will nourish himself with the bread of angels, with the true body and blood of the God-Man. Immeasurable are the treasures of grace and salvation wherewith the Lord favors the soul that receives Him in holy communion if it places no obstacles to their bestowal. But, alas! so many unruly inclinations, so many venial sins perhaps shut the gate of divine mercy; that is, they prevent us from receiving the superabundant graces which we would otherwise receive. The heart is often so taken up with earthly cares that no room is left to the divine outpourings. The priest, mindful of his own misery, addresses two fervent prayers to Our Saviour, whom he is about to receive, that he may be as worthy as possible to unite himself with his Lord and Master. With eyes fixed on the sacred Host, his heart burning with love for Jesus concealed

under the sacramental species, he says: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, who, according to the will of Thy Father, through the co-operation of the Holy Ghost, hast by Thy death given life to the world; deliver me, by this most sacred body and blood, from all my iniquities and from all evils; make me always adhere to Thy commandments, and suffer me never to be separated from Thee; who with the same God the Father and the Holy Ghost livest and reignest God forever and ever. Amen. Let not the receiving of Thy body, O Lord Jesus Christ, which I, although unworthy, presume to take, turn to my judgment and condemnation, but through Thy mercy may it help me to receive a safeguard and remedy, both for body and soul. Who livest and reignest with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God forever and ever. Amen."

The missals existing before the Council of Trent contained, besides the prayer for peace and the two prayers which we are now to explain, many other prayers left to the particular devotion of the Church. The first of these two prayers refers to the communion, which the priest is about to receive, but not exclusively;



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AT THE COMMUNION.



the words "by Thy most sacred body and blood," and the general request that follows, indicate sufficiently that there is question here also of the fruits of the sacrifice. This double prayer to obtain the fruits of communion and of the sacrifice is here very appropriate, for it is very probable that the priest who celebrates worthily receives at least a part of the special fruits of the sacrifice, when it is consummated, namely, in holy communion. The second prayer seems to refer exclusively to the communion. Without regard to the contents of the prayer, we might see this from the fact that on Good Friday, when the two preceding prayers are omitted, this prayer is said. On Good Friday the priest receives communion under one form only and does not offer the sacrifice, as the two species of bread and wine would then be necessary. On Good Friday the Church is so absorbed with the thought of the sacrifice consummated on Calvary that she does not wish to renew it that day on our altars. She takes part in the mystery by communion; therefore she omits the prayer in which mention of the sacrifice is made. Our Saviour once asked His disciples: "Whom do you say that I am?" (Matt. xvi. 15). Peter, the

chief of the apostles, made this solemn profession of faith: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." Peter saw only the humanity and he professed the divinity; therefore he was called blessed, and his faith was praised and rewarded. On the altar the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ are really present, but both are covered with the impenetrable veil of the sacramental appearances. The priest therefore makes first a solemn profession of his belief in the real presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. To Him he speaks, though hidden from his eyes: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God." The Redeemer was called Jesus, because He would save His people. By His death He has given life to us, who were seated in darkness and in the shadow of death. The work of Redemption was accomplished by the Son "according to the will of the Father" and "through the co-operation of the Holy Ghost." For the Father did not spare His Son, but sent Him on earth, loaded Him with the sins of mankind, and sentenced Him to death on the cross. Christ, on His part, out of love for His Father, was obedient even unto death. The Holy Ghost formed the body and blood of Christ, which is



offered for us in holy Mass, in the chaste womb of Mary, and infused into Him the burning love for His Father which caused Him to consume Himself for His honor and the salvation of mankind, because by the Holy Ghost He offered Himself unspotted unto God (Heb. ix. 14). "The cause why Christ shed His blood," says St. Thomas, "was the Holy Ghost, by whose motion He has done so, that is, by the love of God and of man." The work of the Redemption will be renewed and continued on the altar unto the end of time. "For as often as you shall eat this bread and drink the chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord until He come" (1 Cor. xi. 26). In virtue of that most sacred body which is offered for us, in virtue of that adorable blood which speaks to the heart of God far more powerfully than the blood of Abel, we may ask with confidence to be delivered from all evils and pray for all that can make us happy indeed. The Holy Eucharist, considered as a sacrifice of propitiation, delivers us chiefly from all iniquities and all evils; therefore this first request refers principally to the sacrifice. The second request, namely, faithful adhesion to the divine commandments and inseparable union with Christ,

refers more to the Holy Eucharist considered as a sacrament—for the last two favors are an effect of holy communion—the pious and frequent reception of which is, according to the Fathers, a sure sign of predestination; it makes us avoid sin, increase in the love of God, become rich in merits, and run with giant steps in the path of God's commandments. How touching are the words: "Never suffer me to be separated from Thee," at the moment that the priest unites himself as closely as possible with his God and Saviour! What can the world be to him without Jesus? Without Jesus, it is a hell; with Jesus, a sweet paradise.

In the last prayer before communion the priest begins by humbly acknowledging his unworthiness; then he prays that the Lord may preserve him from the misfortune of an unworthy communion, and grant him plentifully the graces of a worthy communion. The priest confesses that he is unworthy to eat the bread of angels; he knows that he has to prove himself before eating of that bread and drinking of that chalice, "for he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself" (1 Cor. xi. 28, 29). When the priest confesses his un-

worthiness, he does not mean that his soul is stained with mortal sin. Far be the thought that a priest would dare to ascend the altar-steps and be guilty of a sacrilegious communion. There is no question here of such unworthiness. On the other hand, who can deem himself worthy to eat the bread of angels? Our frailty and the weakness of our will are so great that a perfect disposition is always wanting; for we are never as perfect as we would wish. When we have done all in our power to prepare ourselves worthily for holy communion, we must still confess that our heart is not worthy to receive the Lord and Master of all. This humble confession is a very favorable disposition, because the Lord gives His graces to the humble. A sacrilegious communion is a crime so horrible that the priest is seized with fear at the thought of such a possibility. In the spirit of humility, caused by the memory of his unworthiness, he prays that this holy communion may not tend to his judgment and condemnation. But he knows also that God is the God of all mercy, that Our Saviour came on earth, not for the healthy, but for the sick; that He has taken our crimes upon Himself and has satisfied for them on the altar of the

cross; he asks that in virtue of the paternal kindness of the Lord, who nourishes us with His own body and blood, this communion may be to him a source of blessings, a safeguard and remedy for body and soul. Holy communion is the best weapon against the enemies who unrelentingly and fiercely assail us; there is no truce in the fight between nature and grace, the spirit and the flesh, virtue and sin. Holy communion is also the best means to repair past injuries and heal the wounds received. It confirms in us the life of grace, increases love, strengthens us against dangers, and animates the soul to a heavenly and supernatural life. Holy communion is a safeguard and a remedy, not only for the soul, but also for the body, and that in two ways: mediately, because the abundance of graces with which holy communion enriches the soul is communicated by it to the body so intimately united with it; by the graces which the soul receives the force of sensual nature is also broken and weakened. We believe that holy communion also exercises immediately a salutary influence on the body of him who receives worthily. By communion we receive the body and blood of Christ; we are therefore not

only spiritually united to Him but also bodily; by communion we become perfect members of Christ, and in a certain sense one body and one blood with Him; in other words, blood relations of Christ, as St. Cyril of Jerusalem expresses it. As on earth the body contributes to the workings of the soul, and as both work together for the acquisition of eternal salvation, so also shall the body have a share in the glorification to come. Both body and soul are therefore healed by holy communion, safeguarded and protected for eternal life.

After these preparatory prayers, the priest kneels again to profess once more his faith in the Real Presence of Jesus Christ, and to adore Him. To express his hunger and burning desire for that heavenly manna, the priest repeats the words of the Royal Prophet: "I will take the celestial bread and call on the name of the Lord" (Ps. cxv.). Then he takes the host and the paten in his left hand, slightly inclines his head, and repeats three times, while striking his breast with the right hand, the following words: "Lord, I am not worthy That thou shouldst enter under my roof, say but the word and my soul shall be healed." Simple as these words

are, they express touchingly the humility and the confidence of the priest when about to partake of the heavenly bread. St. Matthew relates that on one occasion a centurion from Capharnaum wended his way to Jesus to obtain health for his servant. Our Saviour consented to the request of the centurion, and volunteered even to go to his house to cure the sick man. The centurion thought himself unworthy the favor of receiving Our Saviour under his roof, and answered in those beautiful words so expressive of deep humility and lively confidence. The Church makes these words her own whenever she distributes to her children the bread of angels, in order to excite in them the sentiments of the centurion of Capharnaum: humility on account of their unworthiness, and confidence in God, who by a word can make them worthy. He invites us all to His table: "Come to me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you" (Matt. xi. 28); He even threatens us with eternal damnation if we refuse His invitation. If we cast our eyes on ourselves, we shall find nothing but what will frighten us away from holy communion; but one word only from the true Physician of our souls is abundantly suffi-



cient to heal all. Jesus not only speaks that word, but He comes in person into the dwelling of the human body; the sick soul will then undoubtedly be cured.

The solemn moment of communion is now at hand; the Lord is about to make His entry into the heart of the priest. He then takes the host into his right hand, makes with it the sign of the cross over himself, while he says: "May the body of Our Lord Jesus Christ guard my soul unto eternal life. Amen." Then with humility and respect, with attention and love, he takes the bread of love, which God in His sweetness has prepared for the poor and the hungry. The priest prays only for the salvation of the soul, but that does not exclude the salvation of the body, for the salvation of the soul is the salvation of the body. United with his God and Saviour as intimately as possible, the priest tastes and experiences how sweet is the Lord. He can exclaim now with the bride in the *Cantic of Canticles*: "My beloved to me and I to Him . . . I have found Him whom my soul loveth: I held Him and I will not let Him go" (*Cant.* ii. 16; iii. 4). With similar thoughts the priest occupies his mind for the few moments



prescribed by the rubrics to be spent in pious recollection of the great favor which he has received. Then he proceeds to the communion of the chalice. As the consecration of the two species is necessary for the sacrifice, so is the communion under both appearances required for the perfection of the same. After a few moments of pious meditation over the adorable sacrament, the priest uncovers the chalice, kneels respectfully to adore his God, hidden under the appearance of wine. He then gathers on the paten the little particles of the host which may have accidentally remained on the corporal, because, let us not forget it, Christ is whole and entire in each particle of the host, with His divinity and humanity; that is the reason why the Church is so careful that no particle, however small, may be lost. Should there be any particles of the host on the paten, these are taken with the precious blood. Meanwhile the priest says a few verses taken from Psalms cxv. and xvii., which are a beautiful preparation for the communion of the chalice: "What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He hath rendered to me? I will take the chalice of salvation: and I will call upon the name of the

Lord. Praising I will call upon the Lord: and I shall be saved from my enemies." When the priest considers the inconceivable love of God, who gives Himself in holy communion without reserve to a poor creature, and gives thereby a pledge of future glory, his heart must overflow with gratitude towards the Giver of all good gifts, and he exclaims in astonishment: "What shall I render to the Lord, for all the things that He hath rendered to me?" God gives to the priest infinite gifts, because He communicates Himself entirely to him with His divinity and humanity. What can he, needy as he is, render for this? Nothing but what he has already received, because all that is good comes from God. The holy sacrifice of the Mass is also a gift of God; the material elements and what they conceal after consecration from our eyes are gifts of God; but these gifts are the most precious, the most sublime and the most holy that we can present to God. Considering then what remains on the altar after the communion of the host, the priest says with confidence: "I will take the chalice of salvation, and I will call upon the name of the Lord." By that chalice David certainly does not understand a common drink; his words are pro-

phetical. We readily understand that man must be saved by a drink with which no other can be compared, a drink which can be nothing else than the blood of the Lord. Now he can praise the Lord; fortified by His gifts, he is enabled to sing His praises; saved from his enemies, he will have nothing to fear. The priest then takes the chalice with his right hand and holds with his left the paten under his chin, and making with the chalice a cross on himself, he says: "May the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ guard my soul unto eternal life. Amen." Then he takes with great reverence the precious blood and the particles of the host which he had mingled with it at the time when he addressed his greeting of peace to the people. The chalice of salvation communicates to the soul an abundance of happiness, which overflows on the body; it unites body and soul by the strongest bonds to their God, and subdues the voice of the flesh.

At the solemn moment of communion the priest becomes one body, one heart, and one soul with the sacrificed Jesus. The most appropriate time for the faithful to receive holy communion is also during Mass. They have offered the sacrifice with the priest; they have been co-

offerers; many of the foregoing prayers served to prepare the priest and themselves for holy communion. In the prayers following communion the priest invariably prays in the plural, not for himself alone but for all those who received. St. Charles Borromeo admonished the pastors of his archdiocese to see that the ancient custom of distributing holy communion during Mass be observed. Formerly the faithful received holy communion under both species. This custom lasted until about the twelfth century, when the Church subsequently abolished it for weighty reasons. First, out of reverence for the precious blood, which was in danger of being spilled. Secondly, because in certain places it was very difficult, well-nigh impossible, to procure a sufficient quantity of wine. Thirdly, as a refutation of two heretical doctrines. A disciple of the heretic Huss had the audacity to pretend that it was a sacrilege to receive communion under one appearance only. Others pretended that receiving under one appearance was not receiving the whole Christ. Every Christian knows that we receive the same divine substance under one appearance as well as when we receive both, because Christ is present whole and entire

under each appearance and each particle thereof. Moreover, in the first ages of Christianity receiving under both species seems to have been limited to communion during Mass only. At all other times the faithful received under one appearance only, so that the Church introduced nothing new in regard to this. Communion under one appearance is in no ways against the command of Christ, who gave Himself to the two disciples at Emmaus under one appearance only. This at least we may conclude from the Scriptural narrative, where it is expressly stated that they knew Him in the breaking of the bread; not a word is said of the chalice. How then can communion under one appearance be called a sacrilege? Those who do not receive sacramentally should endeavor to make a fervent spiritual communion, that is, try to unite themselves with the Saviour hidden in the Blessed Sacrament with a lively faith, a true contrition, a sincere love, and a burning desire; this is a means to enrich the soul with many and precious graces.

After the priest has finished distributing communion to the faithful, he proceeds to purify the chalice. Faith teaches us that Christ is really present under each particle, however small, of

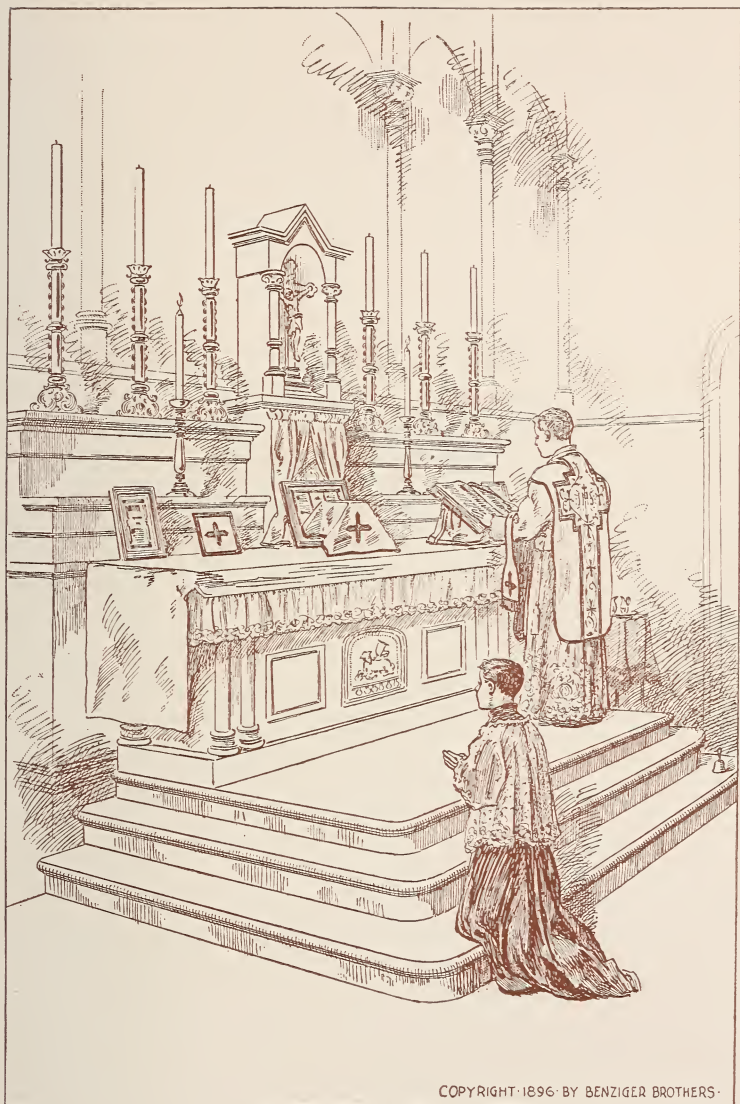
the sacramental species. In consequence there are many ecclesiastical rubrics, which the priest must carefully observe during Mass, that no particle of either species may be lost. After consecration he must always keep the thumb and the index finger together; whenever he touches the host, he must clean his fingers over the chalice; after communion he must gather with the paten the small particles of the host, following which the chalice and the hands must be purified. Immediately after the communion of the precious blood, if there is no communion to be administered, without meditating for a few moments, as he did after the communion of the host, the priest lets the acolyte pour a little wine into the chalice, while he says the following prayer: "Let us receive what we have taken with our mouth, O Lord, with a pure heart, and of the temporal gift become unto us an eternal remedy." These few words contain a double prayer. First, the priest asks that his sacramental communion may also be a spiritual, that is, a worthy communion. In holy communion we receive indeed Christ; we eat, in the proper sense of the word, the flesh of the Saviour and drink His blood; but in order that this sacramental



union be unto us the source of all graces, we must receive our heavenly Guest with a pure heart, that is, a heart free from all earthly and perishable things, and filled with heavenly love and a burning desire after heavenly treasures. Secondly, the priest asks that this temporal gift become unto him an eternal remedy. By temporal gifts are meant here the sacrifice and the sacrament. They are a temporal gift; first, because they are consummated in time, on a determined moment; they are therefore gifts of time; secondly, because both are meant for time only, not for eternity, since by the sacrifice of the altar the death of Christ is to be announced until He shall come; in eternity no mysteries will be needed, because we shall see God face to face. Thirdly, they may also be called a temporal gift, because they are consummated in a short time. This temporal gift, when received with a pure heart, is to us an eternal remedy; it guards our souls unto everlasting life, and is for us a sure pledge of future glory.

After the communion of the precious blood, wine but no water is poured into the chalice, because, as St. Thomas says, "wine is of its nature more appropriate to remove from the





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AT THE POST-COMMUNION.



chalice and the mouth of the priest every particle of the holy species." Wine mixes better with itself than water; consequently, it is easier removed with wine than with water. When, however, we speak of wine, we mean the appearances, not the substance, for the few drops which adhere to the chalice are no longer wine, but the blood of Christ. Probably the most plausible reason why after communion wine is first poured into the chalice is respect for the sacred species. Should one pour so much water into the consecrated chalice as to remove the appearance of wine, Christ would cease to be present. For the same reasons first a few drops of wine are poured over the fingers of the priest and then water; afterwards he wipes them with the purificator.

During the washing of the hands the priest says the following prayer: "May Thy body, O Lord, which I have received, and Thy blood, which I have drunk, adhere to my bowels, and grant that there may remain no stain of wickedness in me, whom the pure and holy sacraments have nourished. Who livest and reignest forever and ever. Amen." This, like the foregoing prayer, seems to have been composed in the very first ages of Christianity. The body and blood of

Christ remain as long as the sacramental species have not been consumed. When we therefore ask in this prayer that they may adhere to our bowels, we do not mean that the sacred body and blood of Christ may continually remain in us in substance, but that the sacramental power and grace may remain, so that we may be able to say in truth with the Apostle of the Gentiles: "And I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20). The priest asks that the effects, that is, the power and the grace of this sacrament may adhere to his bowels ("*adhæreat visceribus meis*"), meaning not the material parts of the body, with which the body and blood of Christ do not unite like corporal food, but the bowels of the soul, that is, the faculties of the soul, namely: understanding, will, and memory, which are fed in a divine manner by holy communion: the understanding by many illuminations; the will by the enkindling of divine love; the memory by a fresh remembrance of the passion of our blessed Saviour; for the sacrifice and the communion are a remembrance of His passion. The priest begs that there may not remain in him any stain of sin. Hereby we understand the remnants of forgiven mortal sin, and also all

venial sins, in order that, free from them, the priest may be, in as far as it is possible to man, a perfect imitation of the God of all purity, whom he has received in holy communion. We cannot conclude this chapter more fittingly than by these beautiful words of the "Following of Christ:" "Oh, how clean ought to be the hands, how pure the mouth, how holy the body, how immaculate the heart of the priest, into whom the Author of purity so often enters!" (Book iv., chap. xi.) "Be ye holy; for I am the Lord your God" (Lev. xx. 7).

## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE THANKSGIVING AND THE END.

A BEAUTIFUL trait in the life of St. Francis of Assisi explains the purpose of the prayers following communion. St. Francis on one occasion, journeying with one of his spiritual children, on a suffocating summer day, came to a spot where he could with his companion quench his thirst at a clear fountain, and shield himself against the rays of the sun under the shade of a tree. They sat down, took a piece of hard bread which had been given them, dipped it in the water, drank and ate. Meanwhile abundant tears streamed down the cheeks of the saint. Masseus, the brother, asked him: "Good Father, why do you weep?" "Can I refrain from shedding tears of gratitude," answered St. Francis, "while our heavenly Father has prepared here so precious a repast?" Masseus smiled; it seemed somewhat exaggerated to him to call a piece of hard bread and a little water a precious repast. The saint

then continued: "Remember, brother, how lovingly the Lord cared for us. Foreseeing from all eternity that we would come here to-day dying with thirst, His paternal care caused a tree to grow here and a clear fountain to spring up, that we might rest and eat in a refreshing place the bread which charitable hands have given us in His name. Have we deserved it? Shall then not this infinite love cause me to shed tears of affection and gratitude?" Thus did St. Francis think about a crust of bread and a drink of fresh water.

Let us consider then what we have received in holy communion and we will understand our duty. We have eaten the bread of angels, the body and blood of the God-Man; it is our duty to thank God for this the most precious gift which in His omnipotence He can possibly give us. The public thanksgiving, which the Church prescribes as part of holy Mass, is short, but it is not her intention that we should limit our thanksgiving by it. She would judge her children very ungrateful if they were to satisfy themselves with that short thanksgiving, and who, perhaps with Jesus' sacred body and blood still in their hearts, were to leave the church and give themselves over to their earthly avoca-



tions. A thanksgiving of a quarter of an hour, if possible, is certainly not too much.

After the priest has wiped his fingers, he drinks the wine and water in the chalice, purifies the chalice, and arranges it as it was before the Offertory, with the exception that the corporal is folded, put into the burse, and the burse placed over the chalice. He then proceeds to the epistle side, to which the missal has meanwhile been carried by the acolyte, and reads the antiphon, called *Communio*. In the first ages of Christianity all who assisted at Mass also received holy communion. The following words of Pope Calixtus, who governed the Church in the third century, clearly express that existing practice: "After consecration, all should receive communion if they do not wish to be excluded from ecclesiastical union, because the apostles have so decreed." This custom seems to have been general until about the fifth century. Then the fervor of the faithful languished, and it became necessary not only to invite them, but to oblige, even to threaten them with ecclesiastical censure, to receive, not every day, but at least a few times in the year. In the Council of Lateran, held in 1215, under Pope In-

nocent III., this obligation was enjoined with severe ecclesiastical censures to approach holy communion once a year, about Easter. During the first centuries after Christ, priests were not so numerous, nor were so many Low Masses said as now. In great churches the bishop, assisted by the priests, offered the holy sacrifice. At those Masses there were, of course, a great many communicants, and while holy communion was being distributed to the clergy and the laity, an antiphon was sung alternately with the verses of a psalm, which, when all had communicated, was concluded with the doxology, "Glory be to the Father," and the repetition of the antiphon; this canticle was called *Communio*. Later on, that is, about the twelfth century, when the practice of celebrating other Masses in the same church became more universal, and when in consequence there were few or no communions at many Masses, the psalm was omitted and only the antiphon, still called *Communio*, was sung or said. This antiphon is after the Communion what the offertorium is before the Offertory. It is generally taken from Scripture; sometimes it is an ecclesiastical composition, or even a motto of a saint whose feast occurs that day. The

Communio is one of the changeable parts of Mass, and differs according to the feast to which it refers; often, also, as the name indicates, it refers to the communion. We add a few examples to illustrate what we have said.

On the feast of the Sacred Heart the Communio is as follows: "My heart hath expected reproach and misery, and I looked for one that would grieve together with me, but there was none, and for one that would comfort me, and I found none."

On Pentecost: "Suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind coming, where they were sitting, Alleluia: and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, speaking the wondrous works of God. Alleluia, Alleluia."

On the feast of St. Ignatius the Communio is the well-known motto of the Saint: "I am the wheat of Christ; may I be ground by the teeth of the beasts that I be found a clean bread."

In Masses for the dead the Communio is always as follows: "Eternal light shine unto them, O Lord, with Thy saints forever, because Thou art merciful. Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine unto

them. With Thy saints forever, because Thou art merciful."

After reading the Communio, the priest returns to the middle of the altar, kisses the altar-stone, and, turning to the people and extending his hands, he addresses to them the customary greeting, "The Lord be with you;" to which the acolyte in the name of the congregation replies, "And with thy spirit." The Communio and the reciprocated greeting of priest and faithful are an introduction to the last prayer, which is called Post-Communio, because it is said after Communion. In number the prayers after Communion agree with the Collects and the Secrets, but not in contents. The Collects refer exclusively to the feast of the day; the Secrets refer more particularly to the offering, while the Post-Communio generally refers to the Communion. The prayer expressed in the Post-Communio is extended and corroborated by the circumstance of the feast of the day, by the offering of the sacrifice, by the partaking of the divine banquet, or by all these considerations together. The Post-Communio is always said in the plural, because the priest does not pray in his own name only, but in the name of all and for all who

assist at Mass and communicate sacramentally or spiritually. For all others, who have neither sacramentally nor spiritually communicated, nor assisted at Mass, the motives adduced by the priest to substantiate his prayer are not realized. We add one of those prayers, taken from the Roman Missal. On the feast of Corpus Christi the Post-Communio is as follows: "Grant, we pray Thee, O Lord, that we may be filled with the eternal enjoyment of Thy divinity; which the temporal partaking of Thy precious body and blood prefigureth. Who livest and reignest with God the Father in unity of the Holy Ghost forever and ever. Amen."

The Post-Communio follows for the conclusion the same rules as the Collects and the Secrets.

On week-days during Lent another prayer is said or sung, which is called in the Missal "*Oratio Super Populum*," or "Prayer Over the People." The rubricists do not agree in regard to the origin and purpose of this prayer. It appears that in early times this prayer was said not only on all week-days, but on all days, even on the greatest feasts. It was particularly meant to implore God's blessing for those who had not received holy communion. At the time of St.

Ambrose, according to the testimony of a learned writer, all were obliged to communicate; the "Prayer Over the People" was then omitted, because the prayer after communion was deemed sufficient. Nowadays the "Prayer Over the People" is said only on the week-days of Lent; this is probably a remnant of an ancient practice of singing the Vespers immediately after the communion of the priest, as is done still on Holy Saturday; the prayer of the Vespers was then the "Prayer Over the People."

Having said or sung the Post-Communio, the priest returns to the middle of the altar, turns towards the people, and addresses them once more the customary greeting: "The Lord be with you." At the end of Mass this greeting includes in particular the wish that the fruits of the sacrifice and the communion may be preserved in the souls of all present, that, fortified with the body and blood of Christ, they may in future live and grow in His love and grace, and bring forth abundant fruits of salvation. After this in a Solemn Mass the deacon sings, or in a Low Mass the priest says: "*Itc, missa est,*" "*Benedicamus Domino,*" or "*Requiescant in pace.*" For the "*Itc, missa est*" only the priest is turned towards the



people; for the other two concluding greetings he faces the altar. "*Ite, missa est*" is often translated by "Go, the Mass is said," or "The service is over," but that is not the proper meaning of those words. The Church has borrowed this sentence from the ancient Romans, who used it in their public meetings to announce that the meeting was over and permission was given to all to retire. In the first centuries of Christianity the word *Missa* was not used to express the holy sacrifice of Mass; much later that meaning was attached to it. The faithful met to celebrate the holy mysteries, and when these were concluded the deacon gave them leave to go, as was done at all public assemblies. Later on, when *Missa* was used to mean Mass, all was confused, in so far that even the word *Missa* was here written with a capital, and "*Ite, Missa est*" translated by "Go, the Mass is said," which was certainly not the original meaning. In Latin the word *concio*, or any other such word, is understood, and the meaning is: "*Go, the assembly is dismissed;*" that is, leave is given to go. Before the eleventh century, "*Ite, missa est*" was said at all Masses; it was determined later on that only on the days and in the Masses of a festive and joy-



ful character the "Ite, missa est" should be said. The general rule is that whenever the Cantic of the Angels, "Gloria in excelsis," occurs, "Ite, missa est" is also said; otherwise it is replaced by "*Benedicamus Domino*" or "*Requiescant in pace.*" On the days devoted to penance and sorrow, the deacon sings at the end of Mass: "*Benedicamus Domino.*" Cardinal Bona is of opinion that on those days the "Ite, missa est" is omitted because the faithful did not leave the church immediately at the end of Mass, but remained to assist at other prayers. To "Ite, missa est" or "Benedicamus Domino," the first of which announce the end of Mass directly, the other indirectly, the acolyte replies in the name of the people: "*Deo gratias*"—"Thanks be to God." A feeling of gratitude must at this moment overpower the souls of the faithful, after having had the happiness of assisting at the holy mysteries and having been enriched with the most precious graces. In Masses for the dead, as we have frequently remarked, many prayers and ceremonies are omitted, which either signify the participation of the living in the fruits of the sacrifice, or contain the sentiments of joy and festivity. This is why the festive tones of the "Ite, missa est" are

not heard in Masses for the dead; moreover, at the end of those Masses the faithful remained to assist at other prayers for the repose of the souls in purgatory. Since the twelfth century the practice became universal of concluding the Mass for the dead with the beautiful wish: "*Requiescant in pace*"—"May they rest in peace," which is an abbreviation of the prayer so often recurring in the liturgy: "May the souls of the faithful departed through the mercy of God rest in peace." These simple words include all that we can wish to the suffering souls, namely, eternal rest, the beatific vision of God in heavenly glory. The faithful echo the sentiment of the priest and answer, "Amen." The holy sacrifice of Mass was concluded in this manner until about the twelfth century. In the sixteenth century the prayer "*Placeat*," the Blessing, and the Gospel of St. John were universally added. After the "*Ite, missa est*," the priest turns around to the altar and, bowing his head, he says silently: "May the homage of my servitude please Thee, O Holy Trinity, and grant that the sacrifice, which I, unworthy, have offered before the eyes of Thy divine majesty, be acceptable to Thee, and to me, and to all those for whom I have

offered it, may it, through Thy mercy, be propitiatory. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen."

This prayer is a short repetition of all the prayers which have been said during Mass either before or after Consecration. First of all, the priest declares once more to what end he has offered the holy sacrifice, by acknowledging his subjection to the Blessed Trinity; in other words, to honor God, which is the chief end of Mass. Then, fearing lest on account of his unworthy disposition the offering of the sacrifice may not, on the part of the minister, be acceptable to God, the priest humbly asks that the Lord may not look down on his unworthiness and that the offering may be pleasing to Him. Finally, he prays that he and all those for whom he has offered the holy sacrifice may, through the mercy of God, enjoy the fruits of it, and that it may be to them in particular a propitiatory sacrifice to appease God's wrath. It will be needless here to develop these points, which we have sufficiently explained in the preceding chapters.

The "Placeat," besides being a short repetition of the foregoing prayers, is also an appropriate preparation to the blessing. For all good gifts come to us through Christ, who sacrifices Him-

self on the altar for our salvation; the holy sacrifice of Mass is to us the source of all blessings; the priest is the channel which distributes God's graces. After the "Placeat" the priest kisses the altar, and pronounces the blessing over the people in a loud voice: "May Almighty God bless you, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." The acolyte answers: "Amen." Simple and significant are the ceremonies which accompany these words. At the first words the priest lifts his hands and eyes to heaven, then makes an inclination to the cross, turns to the people, and makes over them the sign of the cross, while he names individually the Three Divine Persons. The priest kisses the altar; this connects the "Placeat" to the giving of the blessing. In the "Placeat" the priest prays that the sacrifice offered may be acceptable to God, and that the whole Church may partake of the fruits thereof; the union of the faithful with Christ and His saints is thereby strengthened and perfected. The kissing of the altar represents not only our respectful homage to the Church triumphant, but also our union with Christ represented by the altar, and with the saints, whose relics repose in the altar. From



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AT THE BLESSING.





this living and mystic union of the priest with Christ, the priest draws the power of blessing the people in the name of the triune God and showering upon them an abundance of heavenly gifts. In Masses for the dead the priest kisses the altar but does not give the blessing, to express that in those Masses the principal fruits of the offering go to the deceased. At the giving of the blessing, the priest makes the sign of the cross over the faithful; the cross is the sign of Christ, the source of all blessing and grace. From Christ and the apostles comes the tradition to make the sign over whatever we bless. This last blessing represents the blessing which Our Lord gave to His disciples, when ascending gloriously into heaven; with extended hands he blessed them, according to Holy Scripture; it is quite admissible that He made the sign of the cross over them. The priest blesses the people in the name of the triune and omnipotent God, who can grant us every blessing; he prays for the blessing of the Father, who for sinful mankind delivered His only Son, and to whom the sacrifice has been offered; for the blessing of the Son, who for the love of men was not satisfied to die for them once on the cross, but wishes to



renew every day the same sacrifice on our altars; for the blessing of the Holy Ghost, by whose co-operation Our Saviour was conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and who by the fire of His love consumes the material elements and changes them into the adorable body and blood of Christ. The priest does not determine the blessings he prays for; he leaves that to the best of fathers, who could give but good things to His children, and will not refuse to them the necessary means that will enable them to be numbered among the blessed on the last day.

After giving the blessing, the priest proceeds to the gospel side and reads generally the beginning of the Gospel of St. John. We say generally, because on some days another Gospel is read, namely, in the third Mass on Christmas Day, in the Private Masses on Palm Sunday, and on the feasts falling on a Sunday, week-day or vigil having a special Gospel. The reading of the Gospel is preceded by the ordinary greeting, "The Lord be with you," to which the acolyte replies, "And with thy spirit." The priest then says: "The beginning of the Holy Gospel according to St. John;" the acolyte says: "Glory be to Thee, O Lord." The priest continues: "In the

beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was made nothing that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to give testimony of the Light, that all men might believe through Him. He was not the Light, but was to give testimony of the Light. That was the true Light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, He gave them power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in His name, who are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, the glory as it were of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

The practice of reading the Gospel of St. John

at the end of Mass dates from the Middle Ages, and a special devotion of the faithful gave occasion to it. In those days, as in the first ages of Christianity, the faithful considered it a great favor to have a part of the Gospel, especially the Gospel of St. John read over them. The demands for it, however, became so numerous that it was impossible for the priest to satisfy the wishes of all; it was thought then advisable to read the beginning of that Gospel over all present at the end of Mass. The Church holds it in great esteem; she reads it not only at the end of Mass, but also in many other circumstances, especially to frustrate the violence of the devil by the power of the Saviour, and not without reason, because in these few words we have a synopsis of the whole revelation, in other words, of our faith. We find therein expressed the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, the creation of the world, the relations of the Word with man in the beginning, the relations of the Word with fallen man, chiefly in heathenism, the fall of Judaism, the Incarnation of the Word, His life on earth, and the work of our redemption and sanctification. We conclude by giving the beautiful paraphrase of it by a pious writer: "In the

beginning, before time had begun, the Word was, and the Word was with God, the First Person of the Blessed Trinity, differing, however, from the Father in person, and God was the Word. The Word was in the beginning of time with God, the First Person. All created beings have received their existence from Him, and without Him nothing has existence of all that exists. In Him, as in its source, is supernatural life, and that life is a light for men by the gift of faith, and this light of faith shines continually in the darkness of ignorance and sin, and the men, who were surrounded by this darkness, did not receive it. There was a man sent by God, whose name was John. He came into the world as a witness to give testimony of that heavenly Light, that by its action all might believe. He was not the Light, but only a witness by whom the Light was to be made known. The Word was the true and sublime Light, which by the influence of His grace enlightens every man who comes into this world by temporal life. The Word revealing Himself by creatures, as a cause by its effects, was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and yet refused to acknowledge Him for its Creator. Later on He came, clothed with human nature, unto

His own, and His people would not receive Him for their Messiah. Those, however, who received Him as their Saviour He disposed to receive the privileges of sons of God. They are those who believe in Him as the source of eternal life, who are born not of blood, as a material cause, nor of the will of man, but of God, as the only spiritual cause. And the 'Word was made flesh,' that is, has assumed in the unity of person human nature, and dwelt among us, and we, His disciples, have seen the glory of His divinity, which revealed itself by the effects, a glory that belongs exclusively to the only-begotten Son of God; He dwelt among us, full of grace and truth, as an overflowing source, pouring out upon us grace and truth."

When the priest says the words, "And the Word was made flesh," he kneels to express his worshipful admiration of that great mystery. At the end the acolyte says in the name of all present: "Thanks be to God," thanks for the wonderful mysteries accomplished on the altar. These words here mean also a warning to the priest to continue his thanksgiving. He then takes the chalice, comes down from the altar, makes a slight inclination to the cross or makes

a genuflection if the Blessed Sacrament be kept on the altar, and returns in deep recollection to the sacristy, praising the Lord.

With this our work is done. Let none suppose, however, that in the preceding pages holy Mass has been sufficiently explained. An angel would not be able to explain so many mysteries. We have done what we could, not what we wished. May this little book tend to the honor and glory of God and the salvation of souls.

U. I. O. G. D.





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